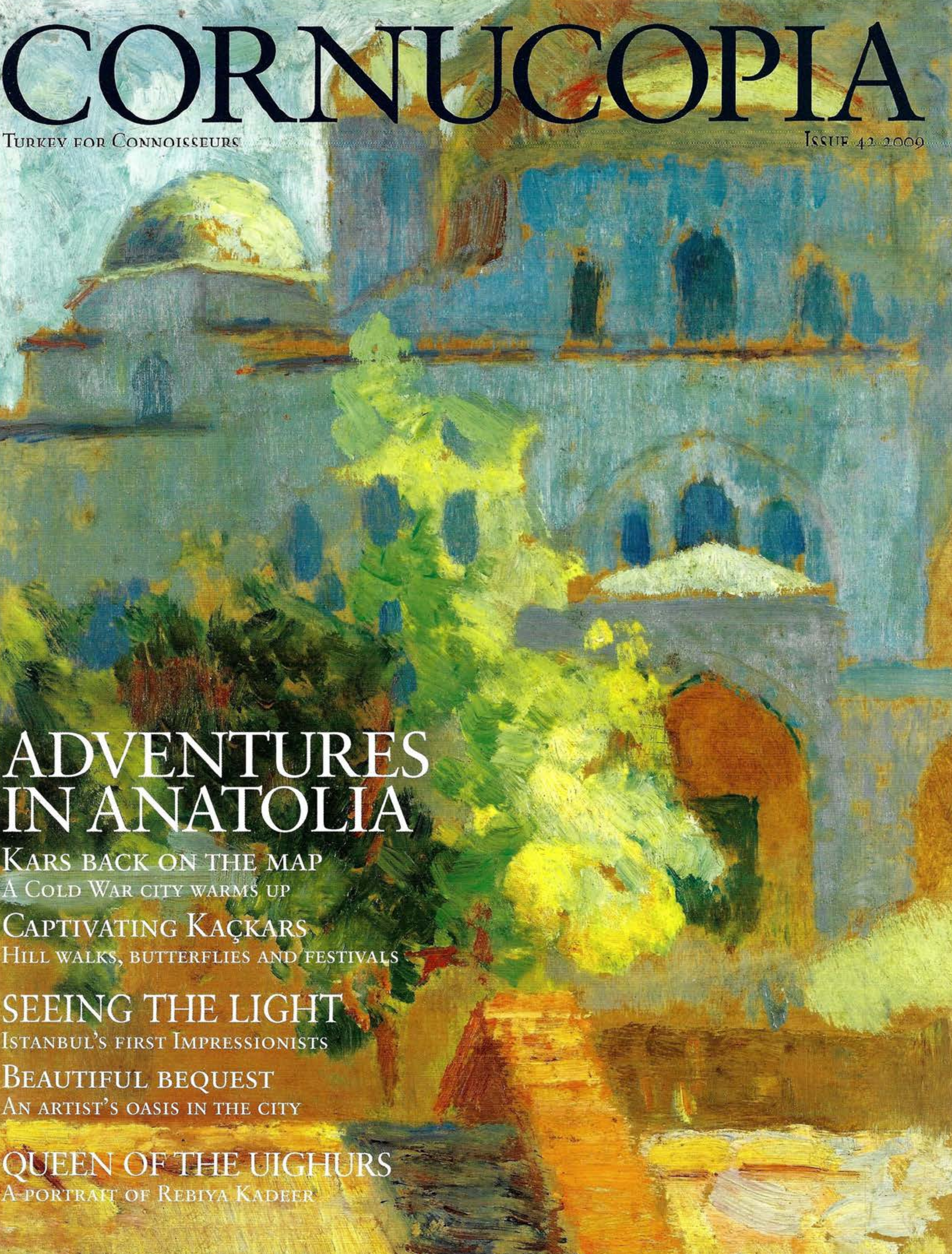
CORNUCOPIA

TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

ISSUE 42 2009



ADVENTURES IN ANATOLIA

KARS BACK ON THE MAP
A COLD WAR CITY WARMS UP

CAPTIVATING KAÇKARS
HILL WALKS, BUTTERFLIES AND FESTIVALS

SEEING THE LIGHT
ISTANBUL'S FIRST IMPRESSIONISTS

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AN ARTIST'S OASIS IN THE CITY

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Courtesy of the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul

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The Latin *cornu copiæ* or 'horn of plenty', a horn overflowing with flowers, fruit and corn; symbol of prosperity and abundance in the cities of Anatolia.

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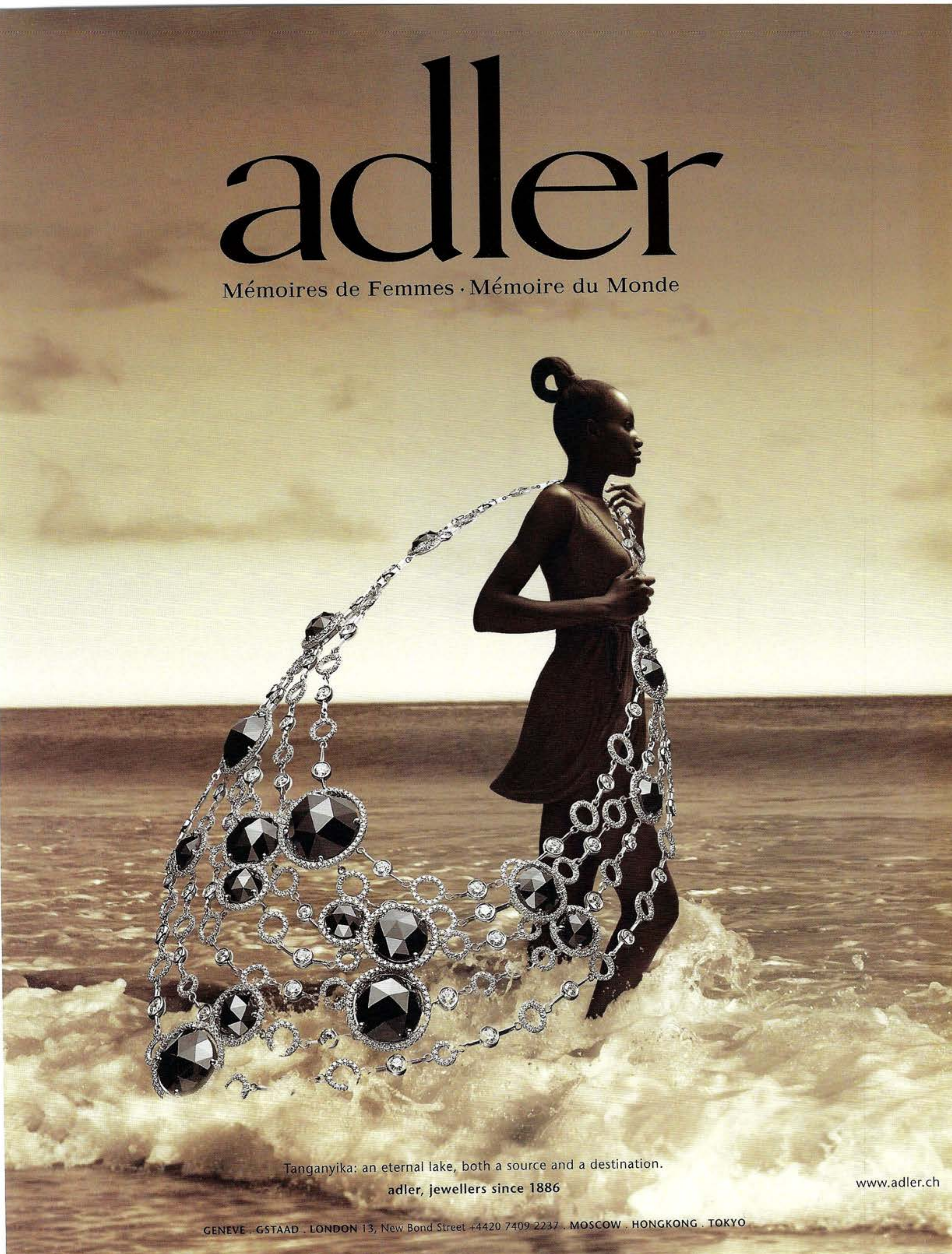

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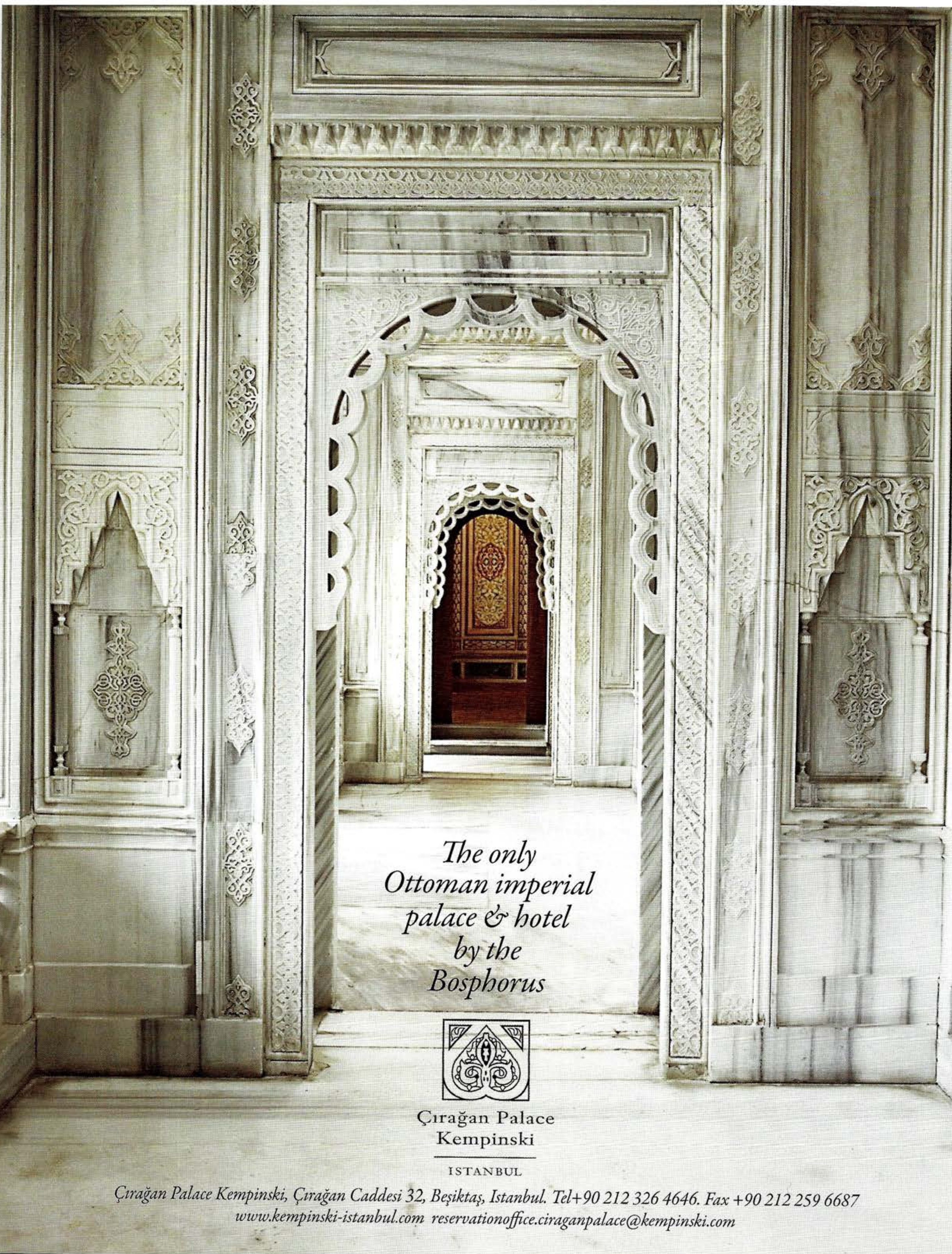
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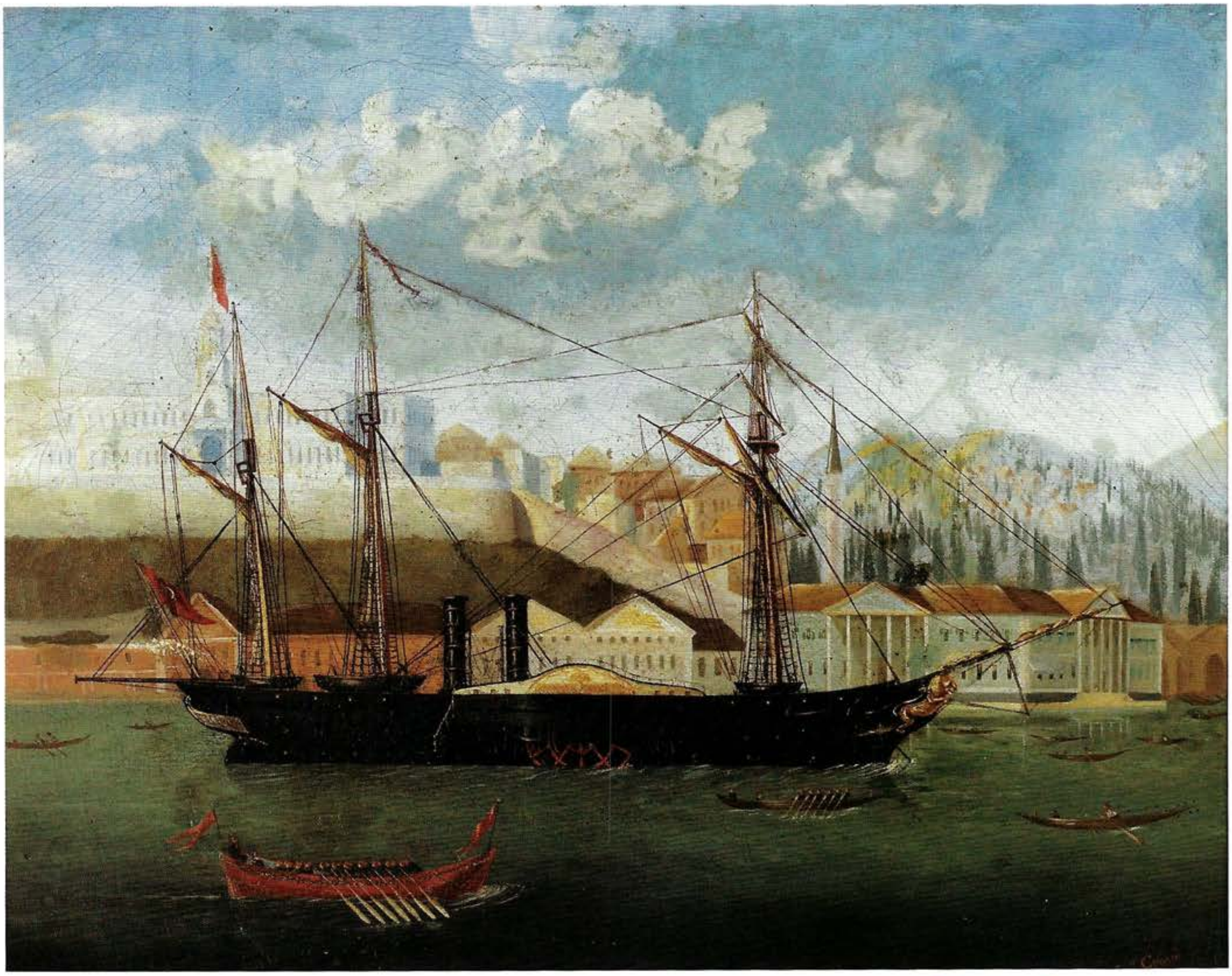
CONNOISSEUR

FROM BEWITCHING BOATS TO THE BEWILDERING BIENNIAL, A POTPOURRI OF PAINTINGS, TEXTILES AND OBJETS D'ART, FROM ISTANBUL TO LONDON

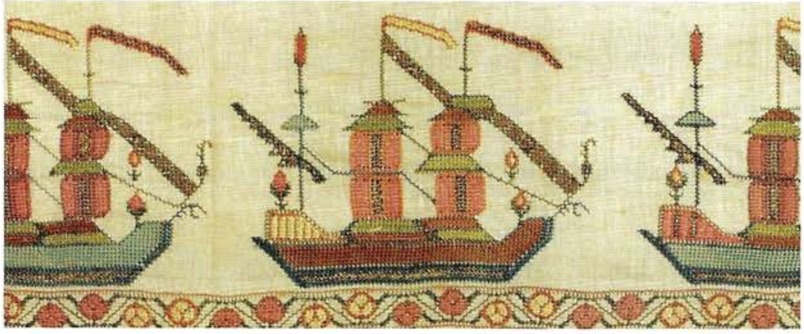


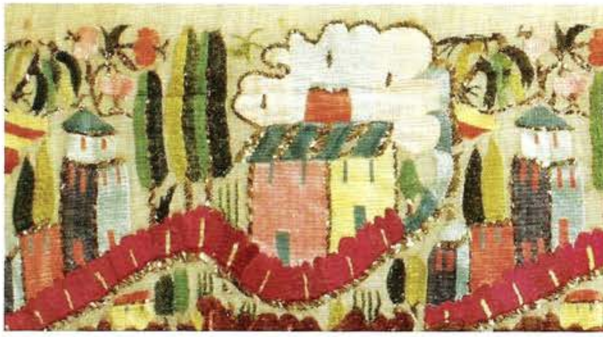
AN OTTOMAN FRIGATE AT KASIMPAŞA, 1848

△ This sleek side-wheeler frigate, with a gilded lion adorning its prow and twin smokestacks, was part of a fleet of 74 vessels that made Turkey a formidable power before the Crimean War. Beyond is the Tersane-i Amire, the newly modernised 15th-century Golden Horn dockyards. Signed H Gerard, this oil, from the Naval Museum in Beşiktaş, is part of *Logbook of the Ottoman Navy: Ships, Legends, Sailors*, at the Pera Museum, Istanbul, until October 4

CLASSICAL CAUCASIAN WEAVES FROM YEREVAN

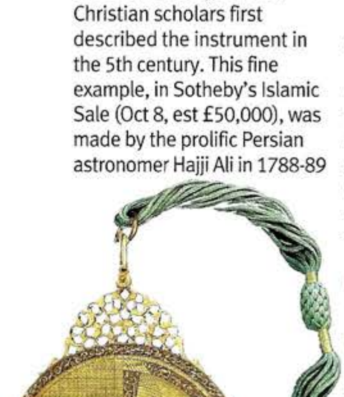
◁ The Istanbul textile dealer Mehmet Çetinkaya, whose brilliant Uzbek ikat *chapans* brightened the cover of *Cornucopia* 37, has launched a new centre of carpet production in Yerevan, combining Caucasian and Armenian weaving techniques with his own deliciously dyed Turkish silks and cotton. Designs range from classical Uşaks to densely patterned Caucasians, such as this one. Rugs measure up to 150cm in length (cetinkayagallery.com)





ASTROLABE BY HAJJI ALI, ISFAHAN, 1788-89

▽ Establishing the Qiblah, or direction of Mecca, is just one of a thousand uses of the astrolabe listed by al-Sufi in the 10th century. Eastern Christian scholars first described the instrument in the 5th century. This fine example, in Sotheby's Islamic Sale (Oct 8, est £50,000), was made by the prolific Persian astronomer Hajji Ali in 1788-89

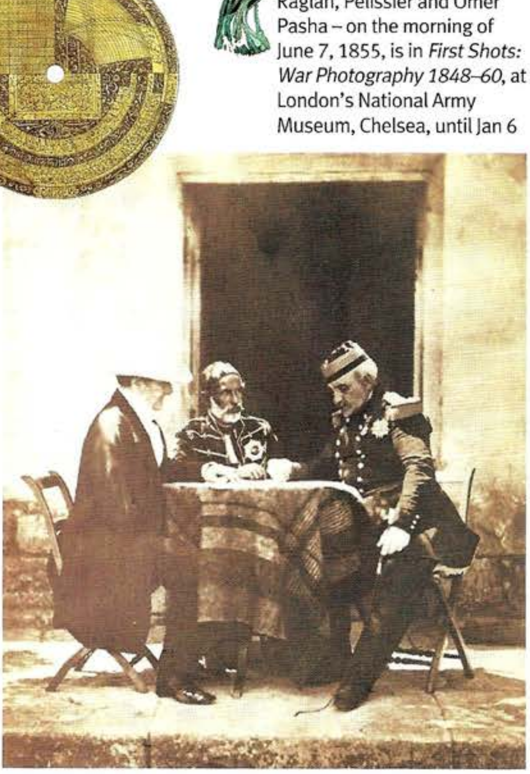


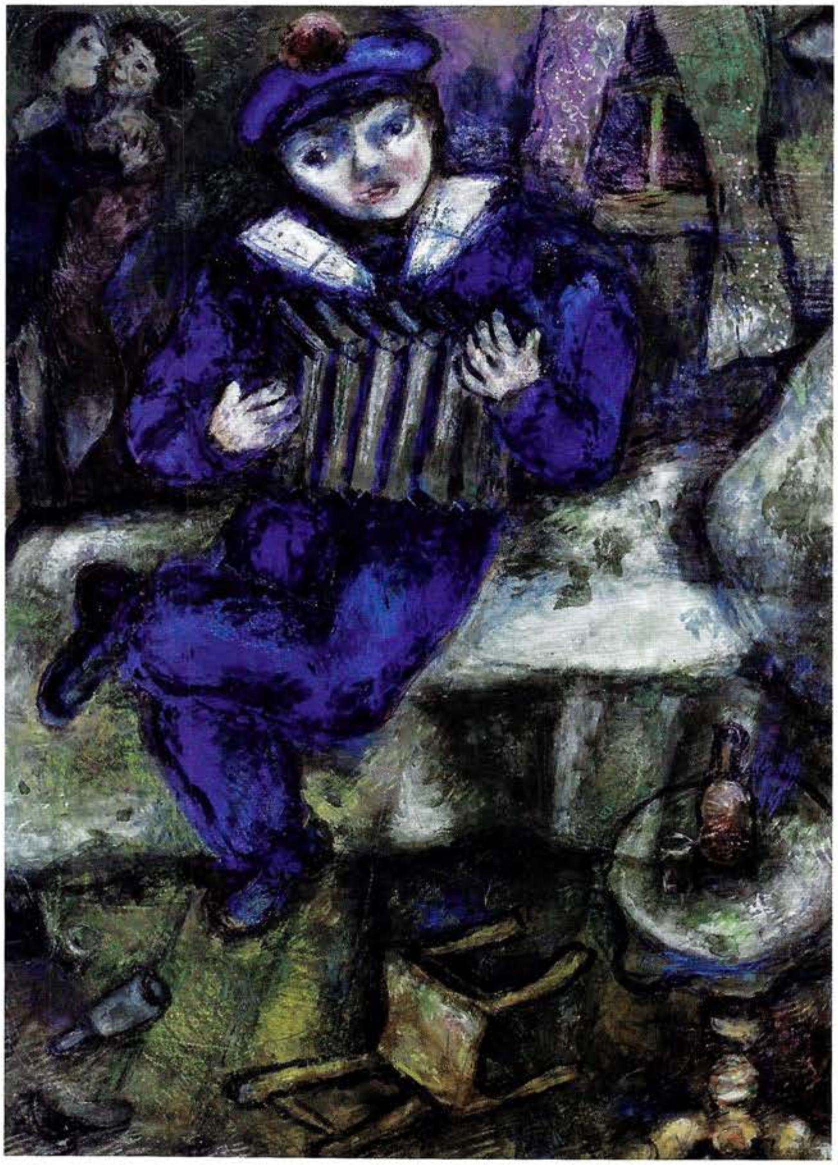
ULLA THER'S OTTOMAN EMBROIDERIES

△ "A joyous volume that will put these silken gems firmly on the art-historical map," wrote Penny Oakley of Ulla Ther's *Floral Messages: From Ottoman Court Embroideries to Anatolian Trousseau Chests* (*Cornucopia* 5). Now you can enjoy the "flotillas of jaunty ships flirting with the wind; flower-decked pleasure domes, tiny silvered kiosks" at first hand. On October 25, Alif Art of Istanbul will auction 600 pieces from Ther's collection (alifart.com)

COUNCIL OF WAR

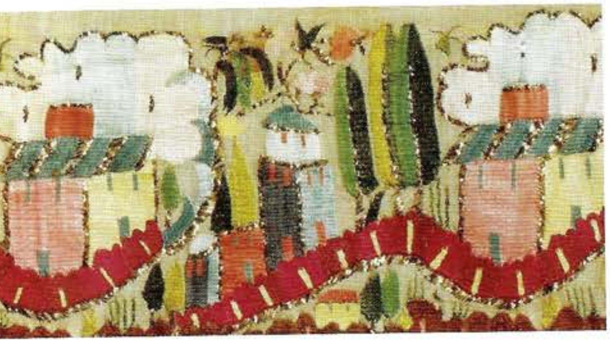
▽ Roger Fenton's image of the British, French and Turkish commanders in the Crimea – Raglan, Pélissier and Ömer Pasha – on the morning of June 7, 1855, is in *First Shots: War Photography 1848–60*, at London's National Army Museum, Chelsea, until Jan 6

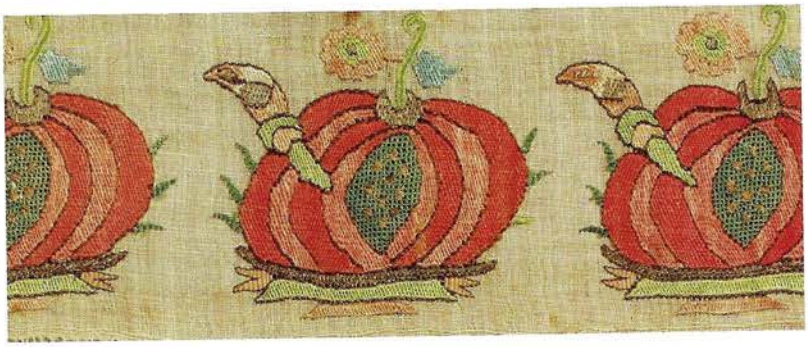


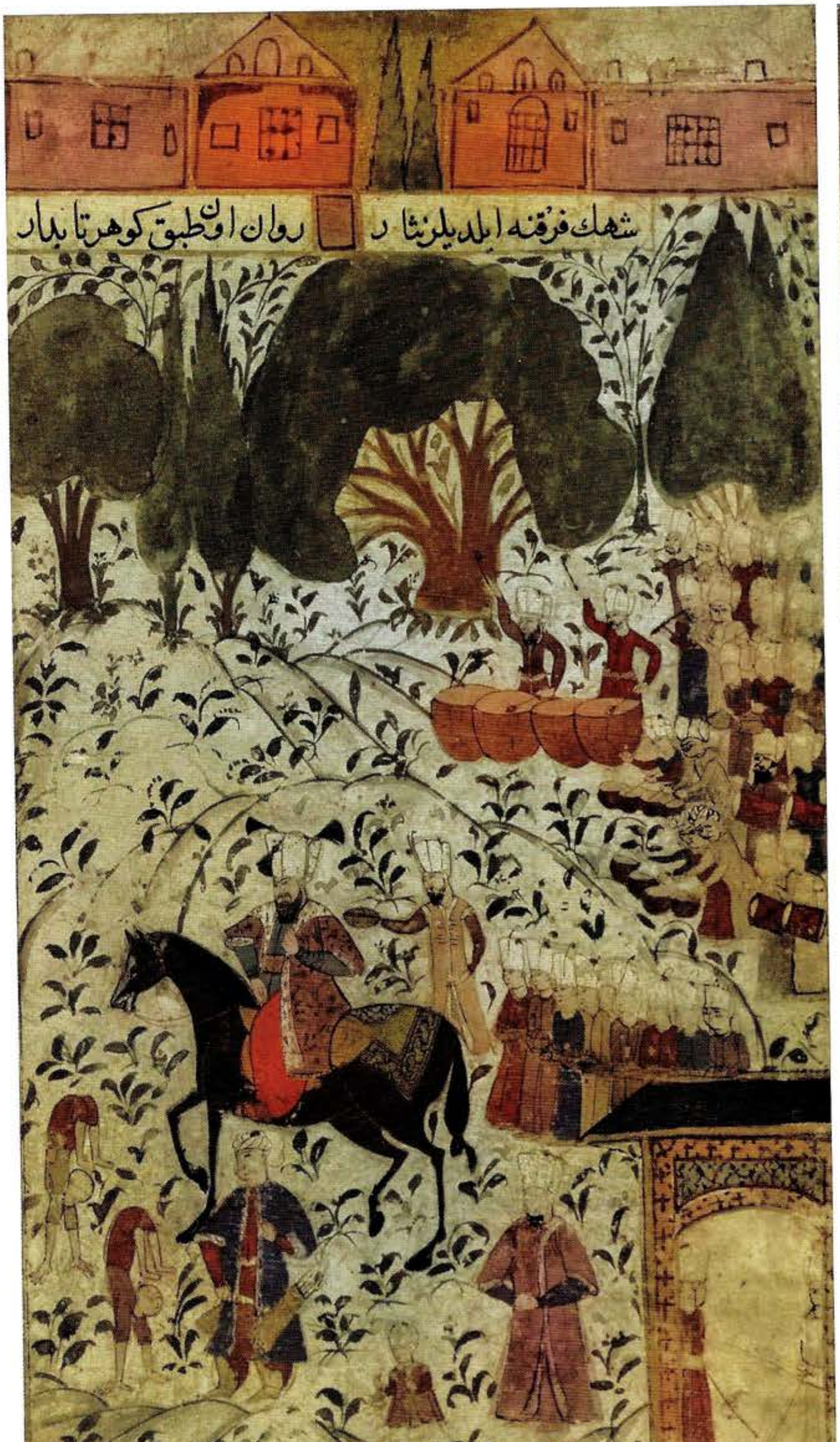


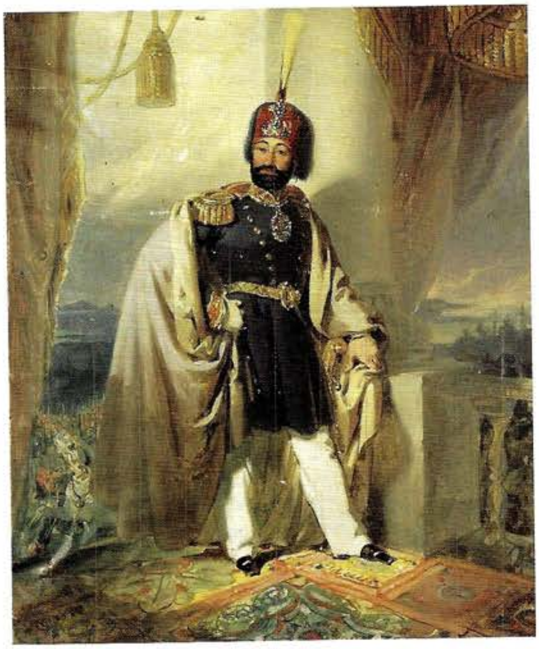
MARC CHAGALL: LIFE AND LOVE

△ After hosting an exhibition of porcelain from the V&A that took up three whole floors, the Pera Museum now opens its doors to Chagall's prints, drawings and paintings from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (Oct 24 – Jan 24). The focus is on his illustrations to books, several written by his beloved wife Bella. The show was planned for last winter, but postponed because of the conflict in Gaza. *The Accordionist* was painted in 1912, a year after Chagall and Bella had moved from St Petersburg to Paris (peramuzesi.org.tr)









The Conquest of Eğri

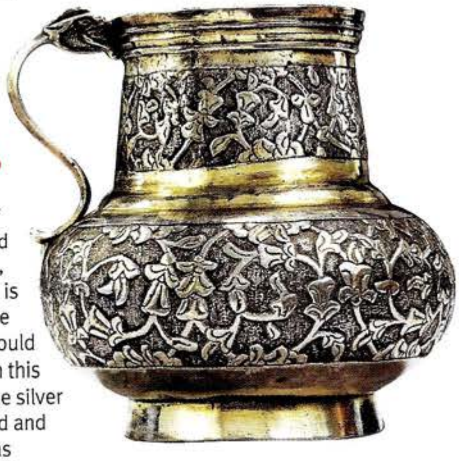
◁ Ten miniatures illustrate the 27 pages of this 17th-century manuscript recounting the capture of Eğri from the Hapsburgs in 1596, and the victorious return of Mehmed III to Istanbul. Fascinatingly, the two incomplete examples reveal the lucid draughtsmanship behind the designs. (Sotheby's, Oct 8, est £30,000)

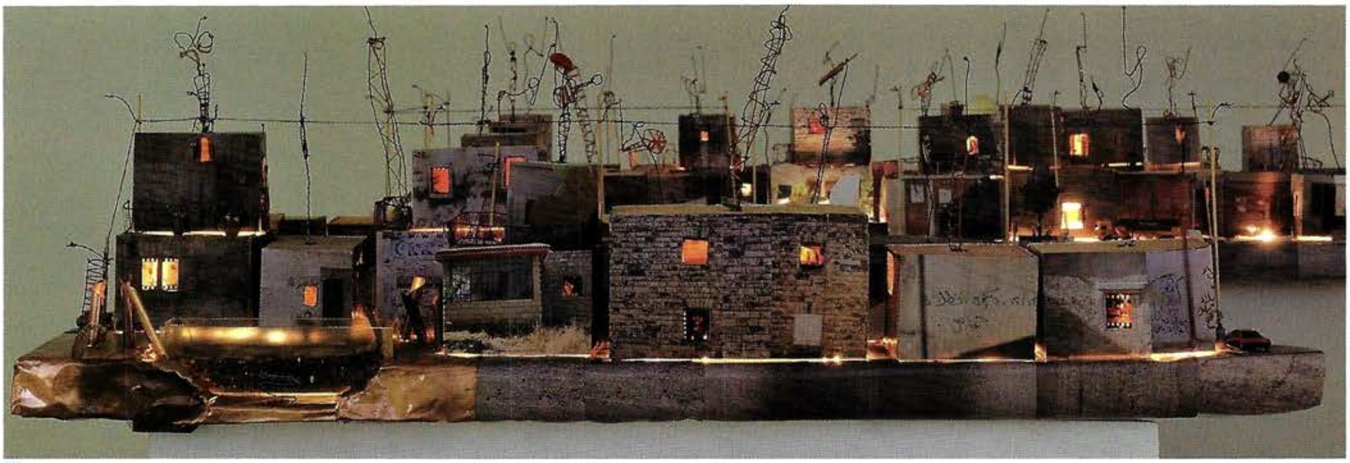
Ottoman tankard, 16th century

▷ The prototype of this dragon-handled tankard (Sotheby's, Oct 8, est £40,000) is Central Asian. At the court of Timur, it would have been inlaid. In this Balkan example, the silver is bossed, engraved and punched, with areas deliberately darkened

Mahmud II in uniform

△ Dated September 20, 1836, this portrait by Guillaume Schlesinger of Mahmud II sold at Sotheby's in April for £85,250. It was the first portrait of a sultan in Western military uniform and the model for a larger portrait presented to Versailles in 1839





BIENNIAL LIGHTS △ A refugee camp lost in time, by the Palestinian Wafa Hourani. ▽ The Greek lycée at Feriköy, on the Golden Horn, one of the venues

QUESTION TIME

By Isabel Finkel

What, How and for Whom? (WHW) might sound like a Victorian parlour game but is in fact the name of the Croatian collective at the helm of this year's *Istanbul Biennial*. These four women have worked together ever since they collaborated on an exhibition commemorating the 152nd anniversary of the 1848 Communist Manifesto. They admit having considered toning down their polemical approach on accepting a commission as high-profile as the Istanbul Biennial, but say they swiftly thought better of it: "No, let's stick to our guns and do this exhibition the way we always have – we'll curate a highly political exhibition that will really try to push an exploration of the role of art in social contexts," they tell CORNUCOPIA.

As their name would suggest, WHW are keen to encourage questions, and the theme of the biennial derives from another interrogative: the title of a song from *The Threepenny Opera*, "What Keeps Mankind Alive?". The response Brecht gives in the lyrics is brutish and short: "Bestial acts." The rubric of the biennial hints that its own answer will be somewhat more elaborate. They propose to use Brecht as "a kind of (red) thread that leads the way in a search for a form and format for the exhibition, which would be, so to speak, 'beyond looking', and could transform a viewer into a more productive participant – even accomplice". And if this reads like an attempt at Brechtian alienation, then the good news is that, as is often the case with biennials, the perplexing conceptual framework is tangential to the impact of the work itself. Even so, we are warned that this 11th Istanbul Biennial is not an easy ride. The curators insist that some works will "exact a lot of effort from the viewers – there are a lot of videos, and many of the works will require a lot of commitment". They promise to embroil the gallery audience in an epic piece of Brechtian theatre, with or without its consent.

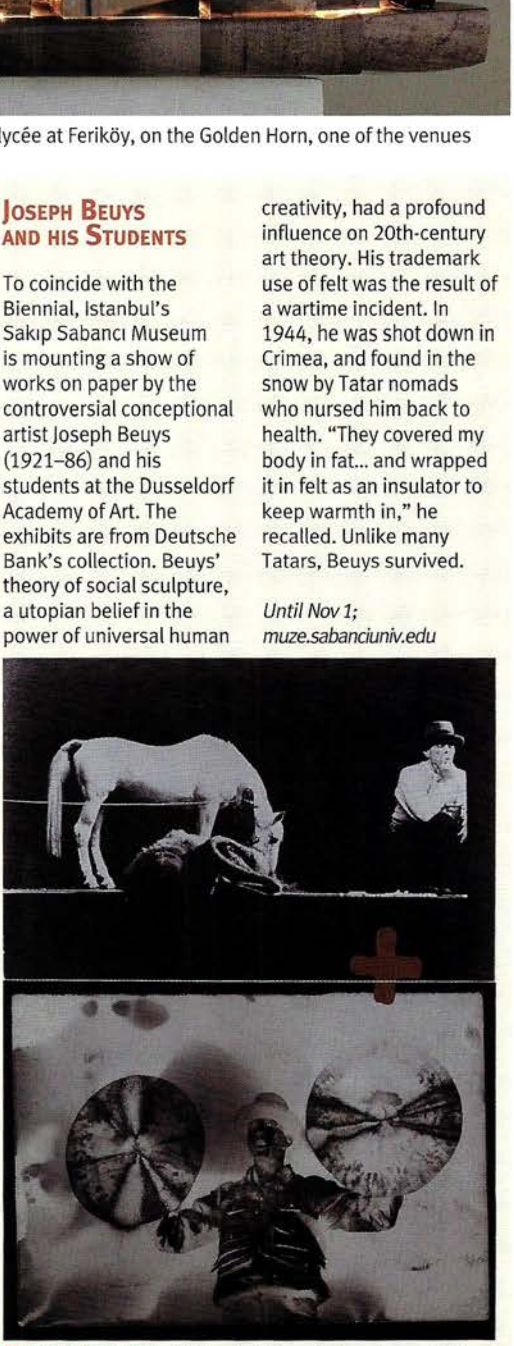
Even before the official opening on September 12, the Biennial had sprung to life. WHW are quick to point out that Berlin, a city once divided between East and West, and Istanbul, a city that famously bridges Asia and Europe, have more than a few clichés in common.

Berlin's Tanas Gallery, which promotes Turkish art in Germany, hosted a prologue exhibition over the summer months. Entitled *Red Thread*, it included works by many of the artists, such as KP Brehmer, Trevor Paglen and Nilbar Güreş, who are showing at the Biennial proper. The "red thread" has now wended its way from the home of Brecht's famous Berliner Ensemble to an interesting variety of Istanbul venues, including a former tobacco warehouse and a one-time Greek lyceé. The global art world has been making the same trip.
Until Nov 8; iksav.org

JOSEPH BEUYS AND HIS STUDENTS

To coincide with the Biennial, Istanbul's Sakıp Sabancı Museum is mounting a show of works on paper by the controversial conceptional artist Joseph Beuys (1921–86) and his students at the Dusseldorf Academy of Art. The exhibits are from Deutsche Bank's collection. Beuys' theory of social sculpture, a utopian belief in the power of universal human creativity, had a profound influence on 20th-century art theory. His trademark use of felt was the result of a wartime incident. In 1944, he was shot down in Crimea, and found in the snow by Tatar nomads who nursed him back to health. "They covered my body in fat... and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep warmth in," he recalled. Unlike many Tatars, Beuys survived.

Until Nov 1; muze.sabanciuniv.edu



BEUYS IN ACTION *Iphigenia/Titus Andronicus*, 1969

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Private view

Andrew Finkel suspects plans for a third Bosphorus bridge once again spell disaster, looks back on the life and influence of the late Joanne Greenwood, and learns how Orhan Kemal stayed positive in prison

Fool me once, fool me twice – but three times?

In 1973 Istanbul celebrated the opening of a bridge linking Europe to Asia. Its elegant span became an instant symbol of Turkish modernisation. Istanbul as a bridge between cultures, peoples and civilisation became the favourite metaphor. Before long, however, the bridge acquired a less flattering reputation for generating the very problems it was intended to solve. The bridge opened up the city to urban sprawl and traffic gridlock, which the authorities could not even pretend to control. So in 1988 Istanbul welcomed a second Bosphorus bridge to patch up all the problems created by the first. This bridge was meant to allow inter-city traffic to bypass Istanbul altogether. It would relieve congestion and conserve Istanbul's greenery.

That just didn't happen. Even before the inaugural ribbon was snipped, there was vast speculative investment on the Asian side of the bridge. Lo and behold, a pledge that, to discourage commuters, there would be no entrances or exits for at least 25 kilometres on either side was instantly broken. Twenty years on, an infinitesimal (less than 2 per cent) portion of the second bridge's traffic is inter-city and, while Istanbul has grown exponentially, the pace of urbanisation along the route of the second bridge has been seven times that elsewhere. The satellite view from space reveals that some 4.7 million square metres of forestry have disappeared. It is not surprising that in the past 20 years the average temperature of the city has crept up one degree Celsius.

So what are we to make of promises that Istanbul will be treated to yet a third bridge, further up the Bosphorus, to make up for the deficiencies of the other two?

No one can feel confident that such a bridge will not destroy what green spaces Istanbul still enjoys. The area around the Ömerli water reservoir, on the Asian side, is already vulnerable. A vital watershed, this is also a unique microenvironment, created by moist air blown in from the north encountering warmer fronts from the Marmara Sea. The Directorate of Highways has yet to produce an environmental-impact study demonstrating that such a bridge will not precipitate climate change, and that less rain will not fall on a smaller catchment area. The bridge will cost $4 billion, and its proponents say it will be less polluting than its older cousins by having two of its six lanes dedicated to public transport. Another two lanes should be reserved for lemmings. It will be a conduit for a city marching to its own destruction.

Loyal to the last

The dead watch over the city of Istanbul. Or at least we should be grateful for the cemeteries that dot the city, remaining green and leafy and making a stand against the trespass of construction and blight. I had sombre reason to rediscover their value recently at the Protestant graveyard in Feriköy while bidding farewell to someone I've known for the better part of my life.

Joanne Greenwood first came to Istanbul from America in 1949. She found her niche teaching generation after generation of children in what started as a modest community school, founded to educate the offspring of the foreign faculty attached to the American college and high schools (today's Boğaziçi University and Robert College). She was not my teacher – I came to Turkey as an adolescent and spent a year in the boys' lycée – but she was the mother of my classmate and he in turn went on to become a distinguished Ottoman historian and a colleague of my wife, Caroline.

Joanne had a determined loyalty to Istanbul that made an enormous impression on many of her children's friends, who came to regard Istanbul as a place they too could never quite leave. Her husband, Keith Greenwood, a professor of humanities at the university, died suddenly in 1971, at the start of an inhospitable decade in Turkey, of violence and shortages of even the most basic commodities. Istanbul was no expat fantasy of the easy life. I suppose there were many points then, and in the nearly four decades that followed, when Joanne could have found reasons to return to America. Instead, she found better ones to remain.

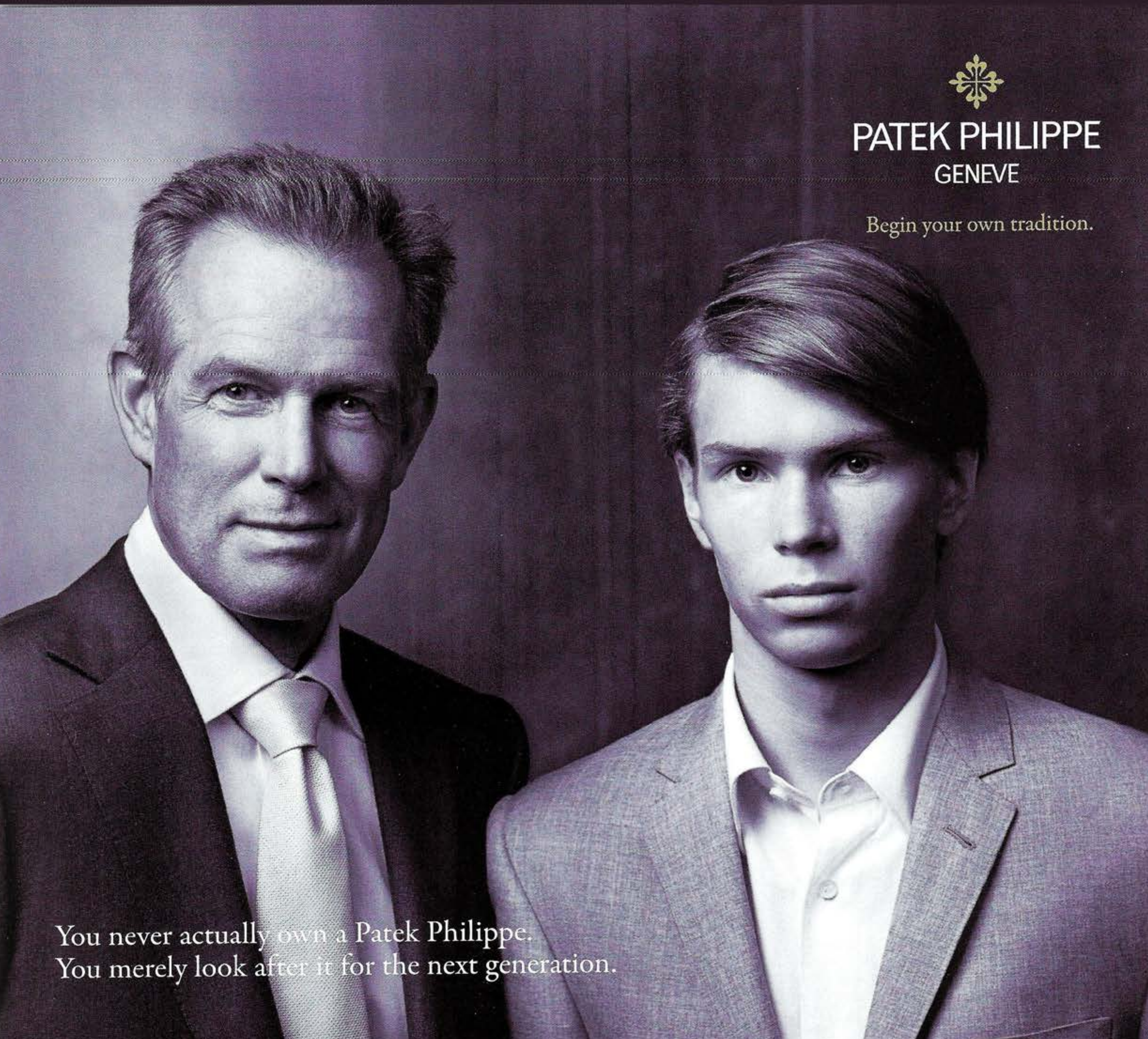
As long as she was in residence on a hill overlooking the fortress in Rumeli Hisarı, I thought I had in Istanbul a second home. I returned here myself in 1981, a no more cheerful period in Turkish history, and Joanne befriended me during those lean graduate-school days. I looked after her home one summer when she was away, cooking pots of spleen and lights to feed her cats. Caroline and I even had our wedding party in that house one violent, wintry night in January, when the only hurricane warning I've ever known in Istanbul kept most of the guests away.

Joanne was a foreigner living in a strange land but, given that the mean age in Turkey is 28.3 years, the odd truth is that she knew Istanbul decades before all but a modest percentage of the population was born. The city I first met, too, has long since disappeared as the population has doubled and doubled and doubled again. But, of course, Istanbul is a city where you learn to forgo nostalgia. You either embrace change or drift away.

While life in Istanbul involves a constant battle not to become sentimental about the past, it is almost impossible not to admit defeat after a visit to Feriköy cemetery. The graveyard, once on the outskirts of town, has long been engulfed by busy streets. It is a stone's throw from Şişli, no longer the fashionable shopping district I remember. The graveyard is a small United Nations, sectioned off into different nationalities. It is also a secret garden. For some reason, or at least when I've been there, the skies are perpetually blue and the weather crisp. It is not too wild, but pleasantly unkempt and, unlike almost anywhere for miles around, preserves a sense of what the land was like before the city came along.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" reads the psalmic inscription on the stone of the late, great Hilary Sumner-Boyd, another Robert College professor and cataloguer of Istanbul monuments. He is buried next to friends: Robert Avery, editor of the Redhouse dictionary; Lee Fonger, the college's chief librarian; David Garwood, another Robert College professor, and his daughter, Ann, who died much too young. Joanne lies beside her husband. The irony is that she had, after long deliberation, decided to resettle in San Francisco. Her belongings had already been dispatched. Just like Joanne to find one final reason to remain.

Joanne Greenwood, teacher, born Oak Park, Illinois 1928; died Istanbul 2009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Lessons in living in hope

Orhan Kemal's prison memoirs are compressed into a slim but remarkable volume. Kemal went on to become one of Turkey's most popular novelists, justly celebrated for his ability to get under the skin of ordinary life. In an early book, recently (and crisply) translated and annotated by Bengisu Rona, he describes how he acquired the confidence to write. It turns out he shared his cell in a Bursa jail with the great man of Turkish letters, the poet Nazım Hikmet. The book is a pamphlet-sized version of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* – an account of a privileged corner of hell.

Hikmet spent long years inside on the trumped-up charge of inciting mutiny, and moved through prison like a respected elder statesman. He busied himself with tasks, building wooden boxes or weaving cloth to support his family on the outside, but he also undertook the job of educating Kemal. He stood over the young man as he learned his French verbs and gently steered him away from writing indifferent poetry into writing great prose. Kemal worships Hikmet not by putting him on a pedestal but by recounting his foibles. There is a brief but extraordinarily moving passage when Hikmet, for reasons that are both petty and sad, refuses to see his wife. She had come to visit but disregarded his advice not to stay in a particular hotel. He has to be coaxed by the entire jail to abandon his wounded pride.

Just as the inmates fed themselves from the scraps they could afford, the poet managed to conjure up a life worth living from within prison walls. Many of the characters he sketched with charcoal and oils in jail he also portrayed in his poetry. "How strange it is, there are many people I love whose faces I have not seen, whose voices I have not yet heard," he writes to Kemal after his friend's release.

In that same correspondence, he chides Kemal for giving in to despair. Great artists write about hopelessness without succumbing to it, he says. "A doctor who believes a man's fight against disease is in vain has no right to practise as a doctor," he says.

Another of Orhan Kemal's books, *The Idle Years*, has also been translated and contains an introduction by the "other" Orhan, explaining its extraordinary appeal. It derives, Orhan Pamuk writes, from a delight in the intimacy of everyday life and the genuine optimism of those who by rights should be given to despair. Humanity without sentimentality is a skill Orhan Kemal learned from the very best. ◆

'In Jail with Nazım Hikmet',
by Orhan Kemal, translated by Bengisu Rona
(Anatolia Publishing House)
Andrew Finkel: afinkel@cornucopia.net

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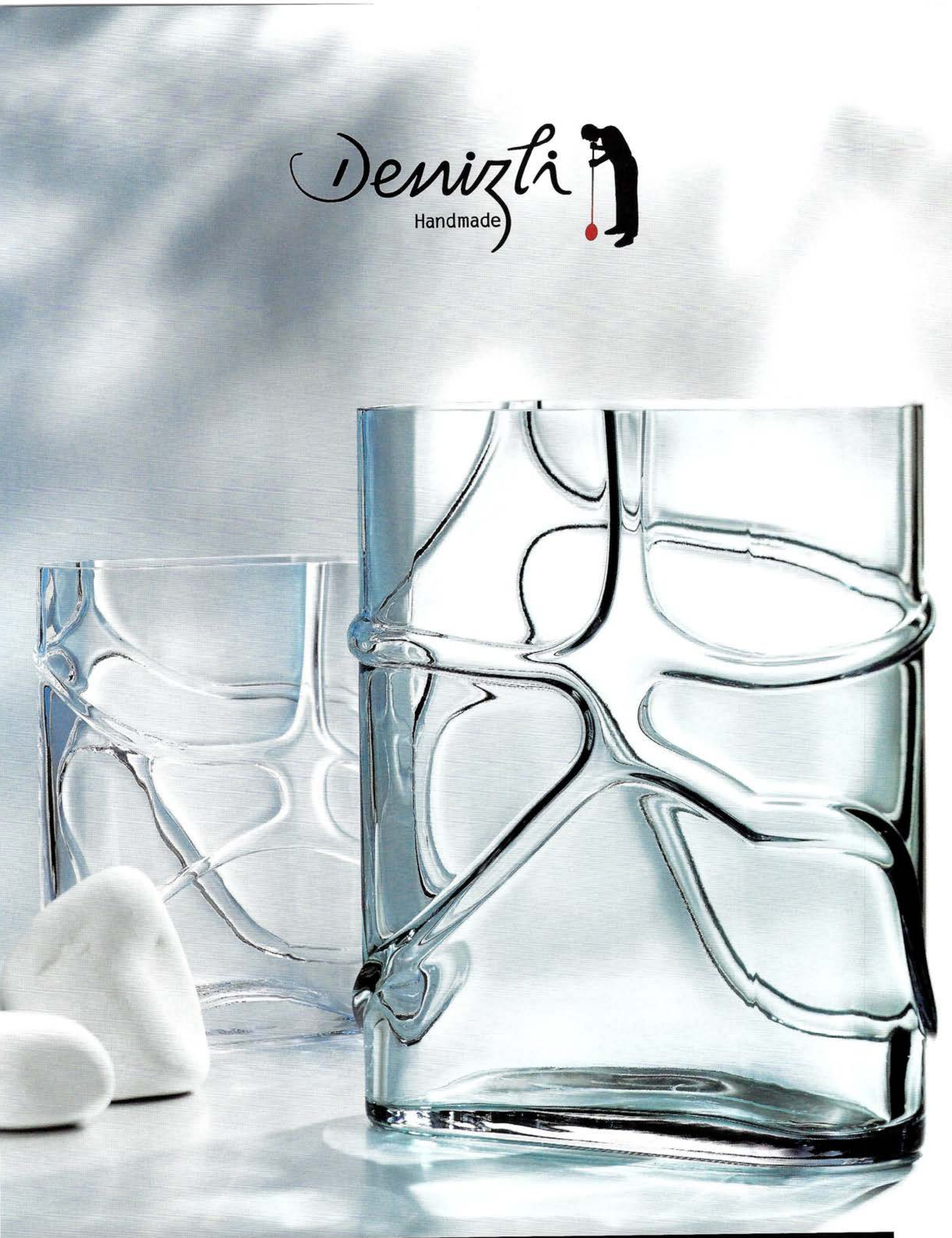
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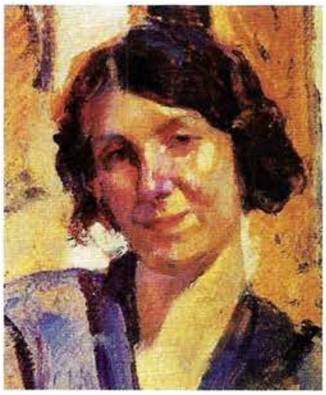
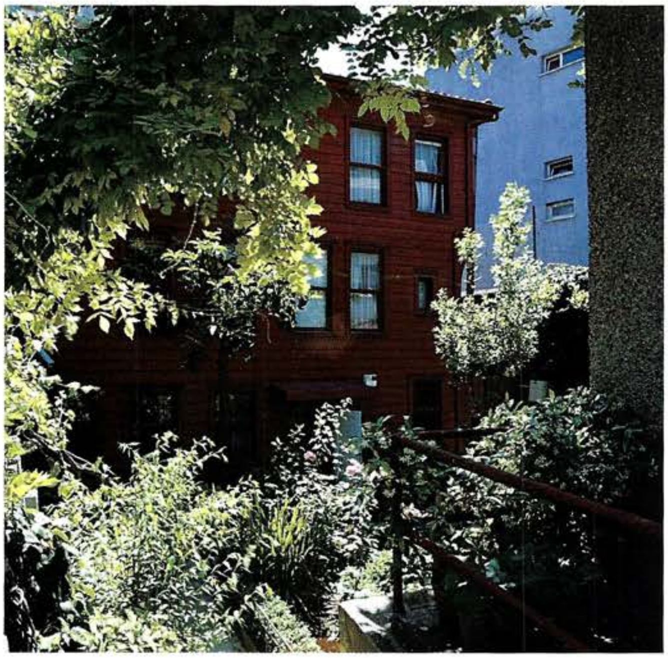
A BEAUTIFUL BEQUEST

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTISTS

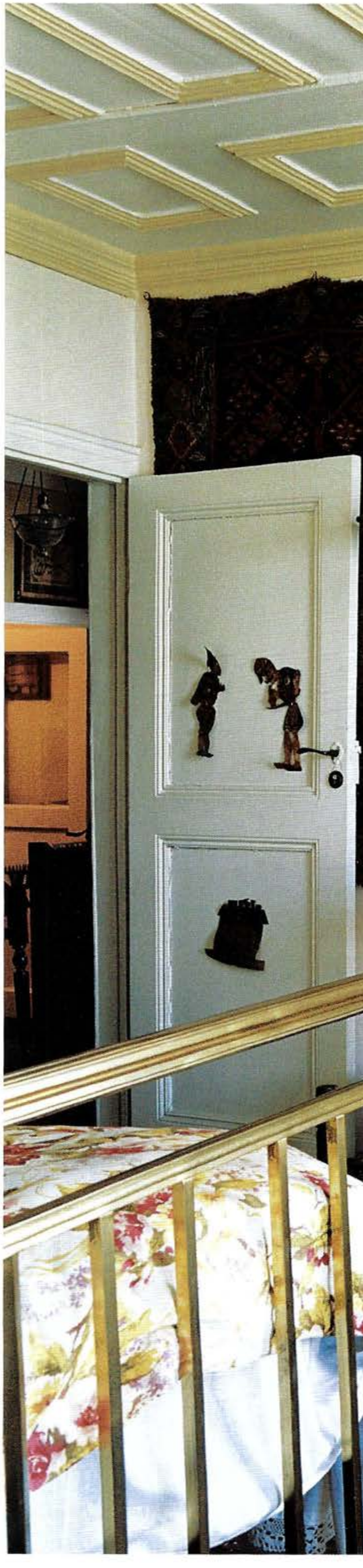




Left: Feyhaman Duran (1886–1970), one of the painters of the '1914 generation', and (far left) his wife, Güzin (1898–1981), also an artist, who was originally one of his students

Below left: the Durans' wooden Ottoman house, painted a traditional oxblood colour, seen from the studio at the end of the garden where the couple worked. Bequeathed by the Durans, with all their paintings, to Istanbul University, the house is surrounded now by concrete faculty buildings

Right: a blend of the bohemian and the bourgeois, the bedroom is hung with a rug, sketches, Karagöz shadow puppets and one of the nudes for which Feyhaman gained some notoriety – a contrast to the heavily gilded mirror and table

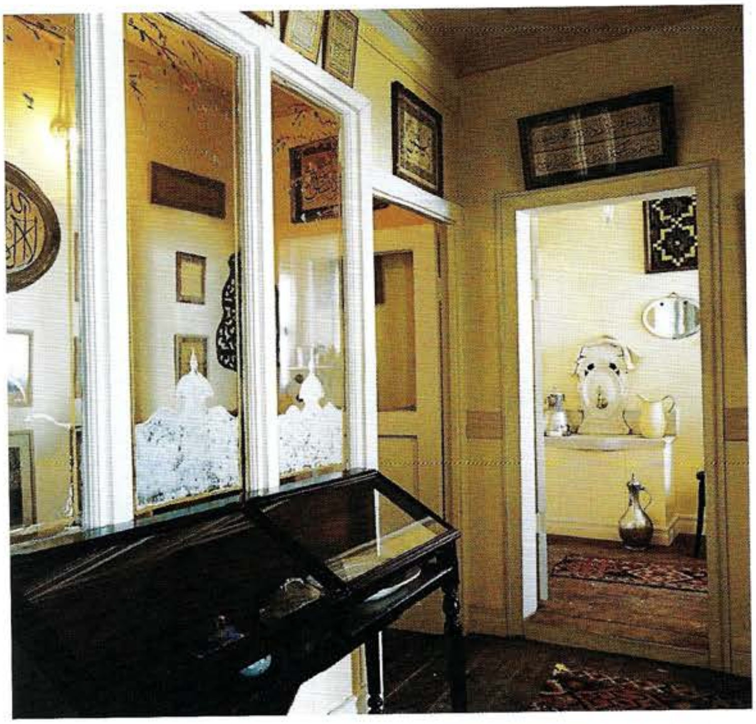


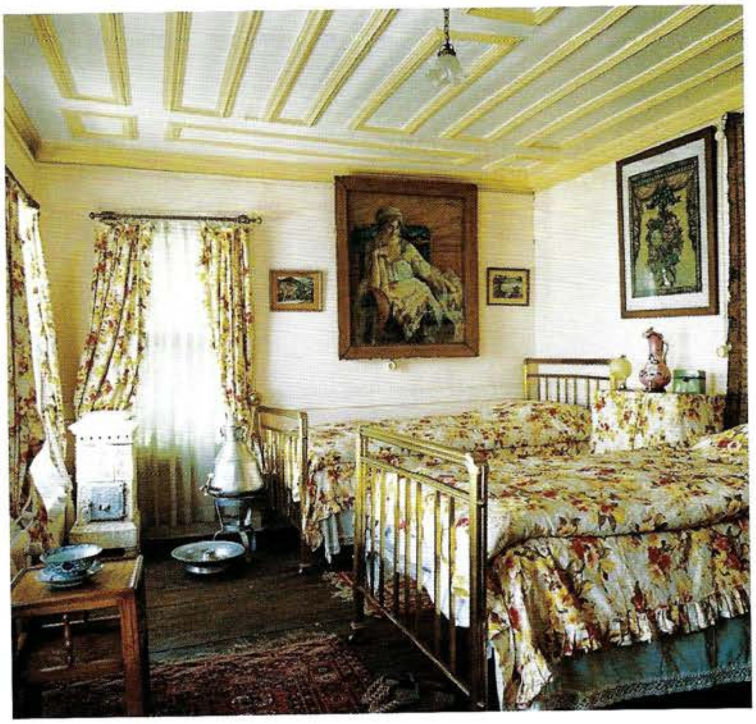
Time stands still in this house in central Istanbul where Feyhaman and Güzin Duran, Turkey's first recognised portrait painter and his artist wife, lived and worked for forty years. Here Maureen Freely celebrates their partnership. On page 26 Berrin Torolsan chooses the best work of his contemporaries. Photographs by Fritz von der Schulenburg

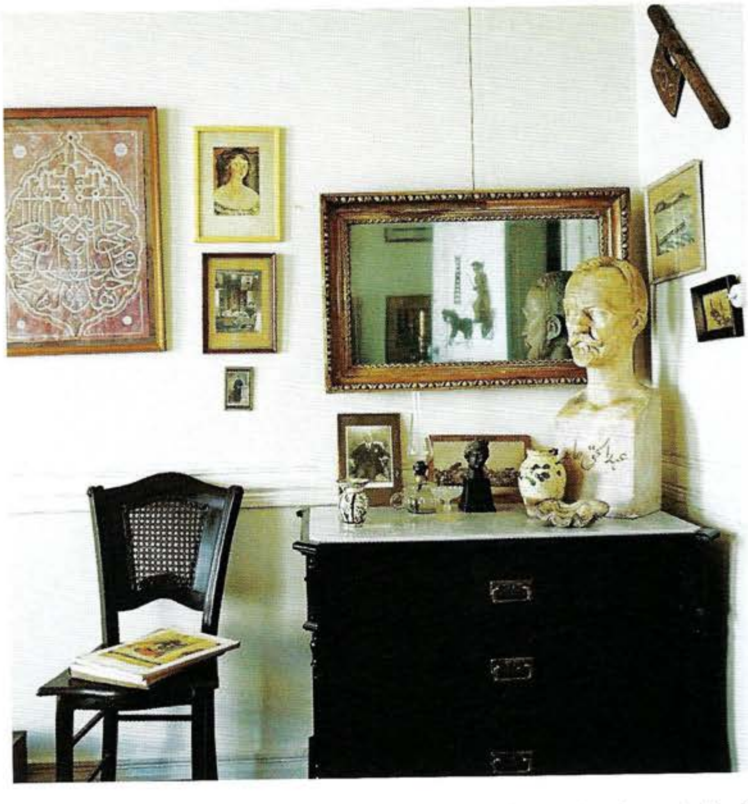
LIKE THE ENTIRE HOUSE AND STUDIO, THE DURANS' BATHROOM IS A TIME CAPSULE: A BENTWOOD CHAIR AND TINNED COPPER JUGS STAND NEXT TO THE OLD-FASHIONED MARBLE BASIN, COMPLETE WITH ORNATE FOUNTAIN BACK AND BRASS TAP

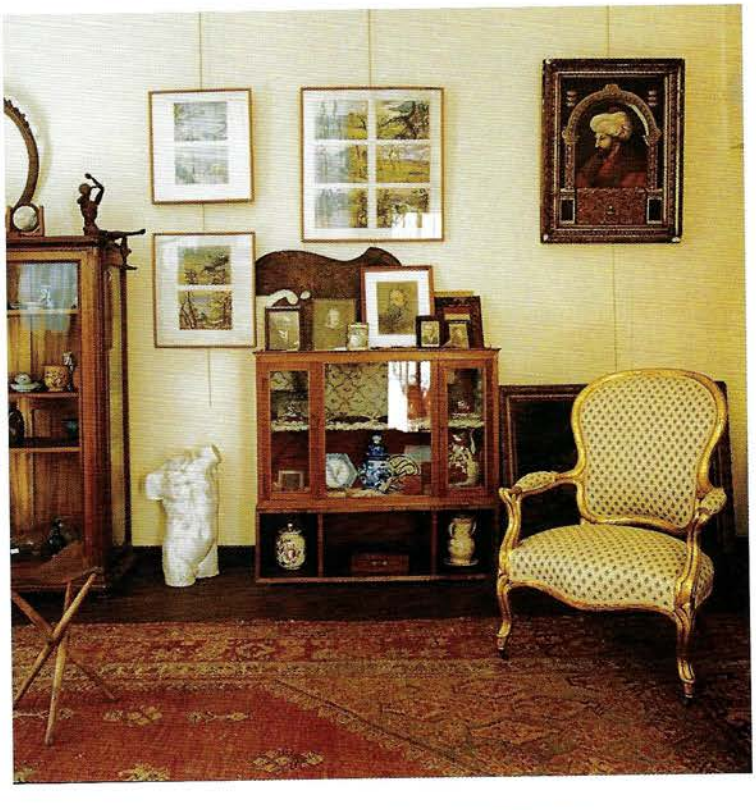
In 1910, when Feyhaman Duran was twenty-four years old and teaching at Galatasaray Lycée, he asked a lady of his acquaintance if she might be willing to sit for a portrait. Saying she was too old for such things, she reached into her bag and brought out a picture of a very young girl, suggesting that Feyhaman paint her instead. "I had no idea who the child was," he recalled many years later. She turned out to be the fourth daughter of the Egyptian prince Abbas Hilmi Pasha. The prince was so pleased with the portrait that – after arranging for Feyhaman to paint his five other daughters as well as several others in his circle – he sent him to Paris to study art.

Following a brief spell at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Feyhaman moved on to the Académie Julian, a private school that had helped in the formation of many leading French artists (among them Bonnard, Matisse, Derain, Léger and Vuillard) and that also welcomed students – women as well as men – from other parts of Europe and the Americas. His days in this international bohemia were numbered. When the First World War broke out, Feyhaman was







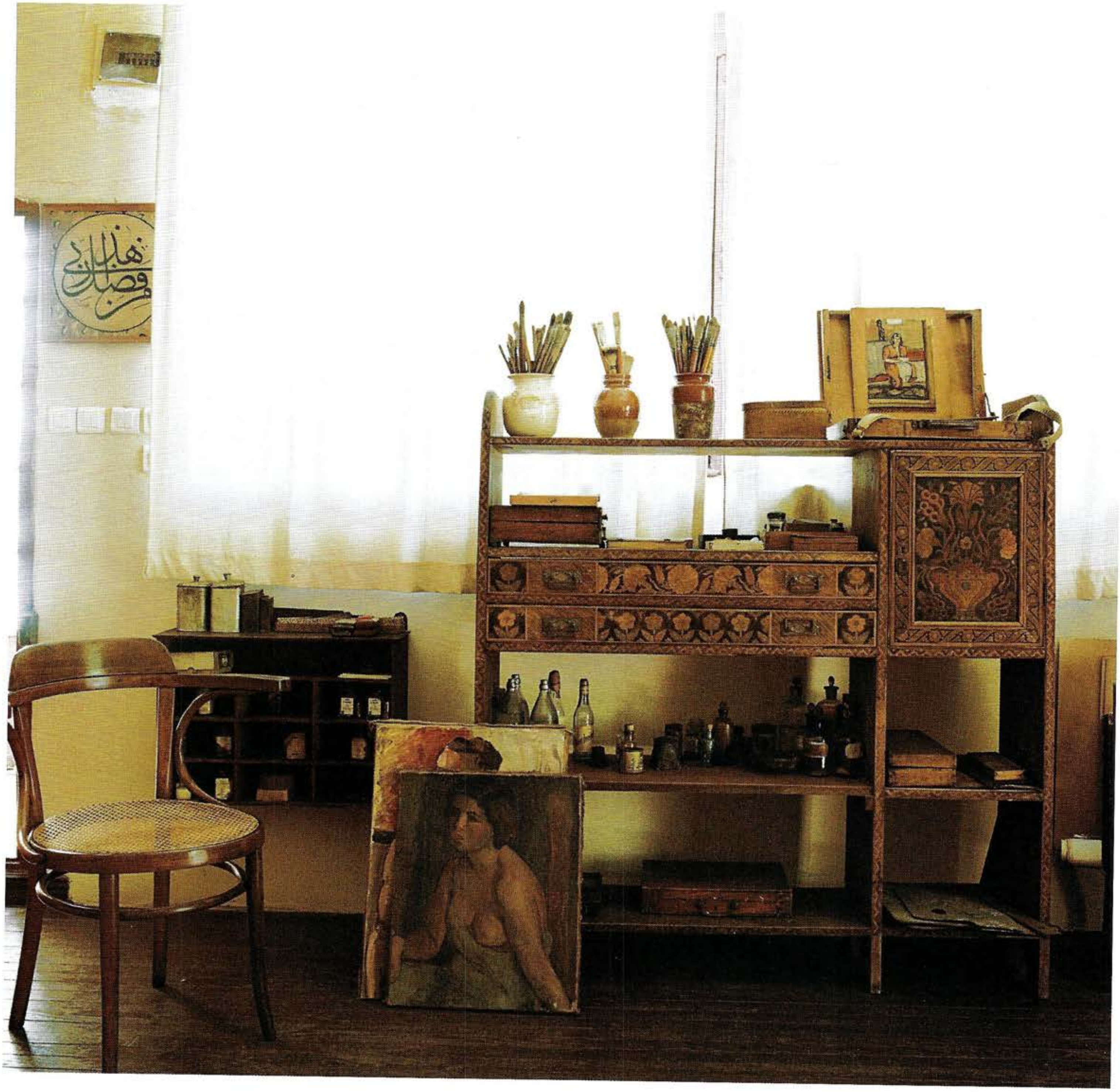


forced, like so many other Turkish painters then studying in Paris, to cut his studies short. But he took his new ideas home with him. It was Impressionism that had spoken to him most powerfully during his days in Paris, and its ways of seeing would sustain him throughout his life.

He returned to a collapsing empire and a city torn apart by war. Though the despair this must have caused him is nowhere explicit in his work, it was, perhaps, his point of departure. "It is difficult to see beauty," he later wrote, "but those who can are blessed." While he earned his keep by painting for the war effort, he kept his spirit alive by also painting for himself. Like other artists of the so-called "1914 generation", he would gain some notoriety for his nudes, but it was a portrait that won him a national prize in 1916, and to this day he is best known as Turkey's first and most accomplished portrait painter.

When working with human subjects, it was the tension between the seen and the unseen – the public face and the submerged soul – that most intrigued him. As he would later tell his students: "In portrait painting, there is form and meaning, and neither is sufficient on its own. That is why portrait painting is so difficult."

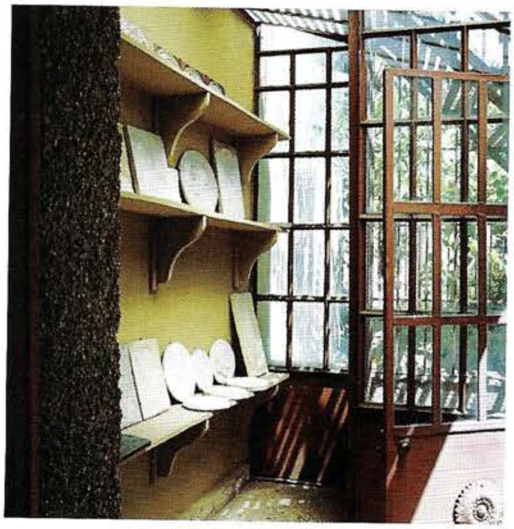
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE LANDING, WITH ITS CABINET OF CURIOSITIES AND, OVER THE DOORS, CALLIGRAPHY BY GÜZIN'S FATHER, FROM WHOM SHE INHERITED THE HOUSE; THE BEDROOM, WITH SLIPPERS UNDER THE BED AND FEYHAMAN'S 1921 PORTRAIT OF GÜZIN; THE STUDIO, WITH CLASSICAL PLASTER CAST; THE DRESSING ROOM, WITH AN OTTOMAN EMBROIDERY ON THE WALL AND, REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR, SHADOW PUPPETS

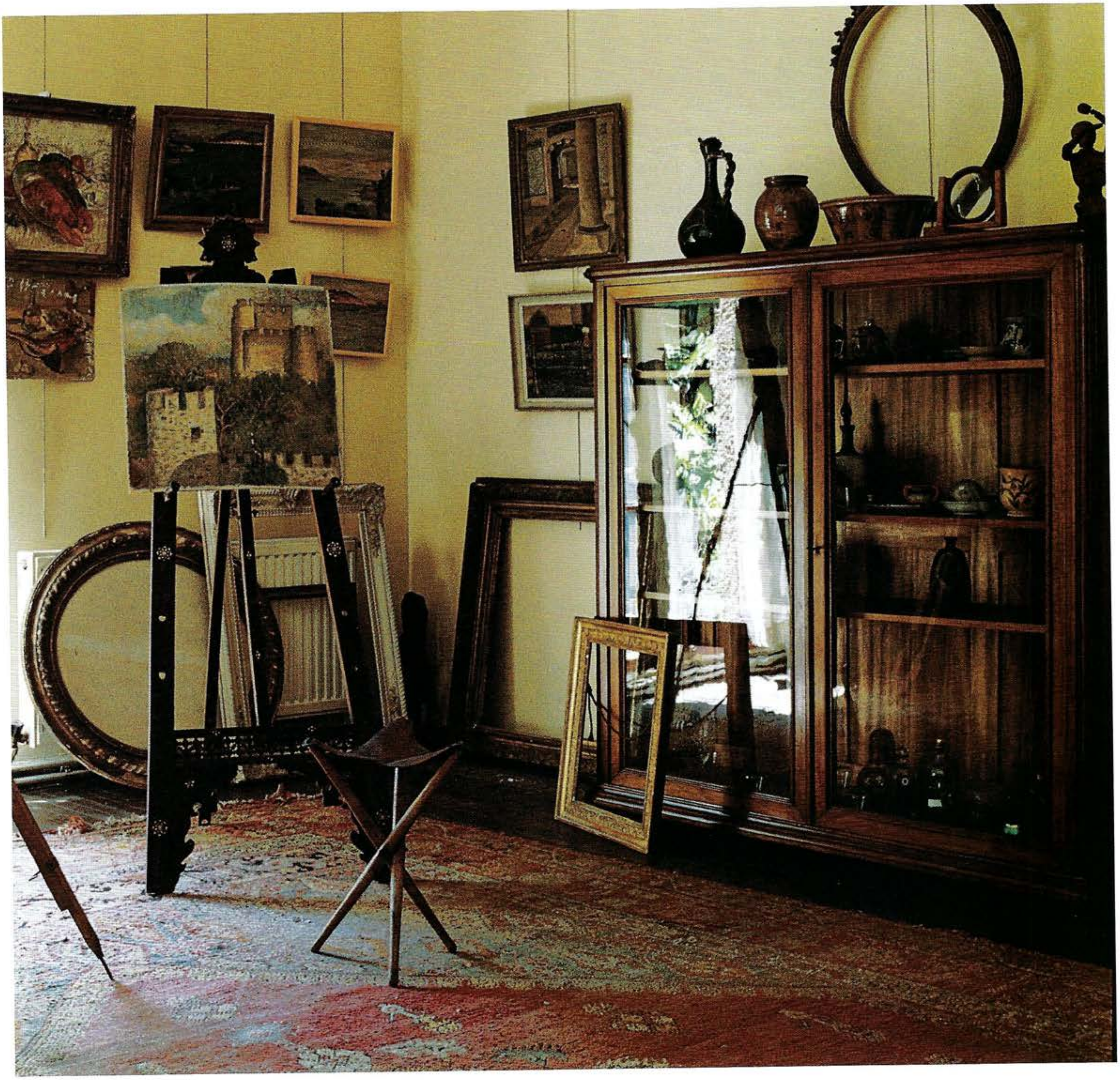


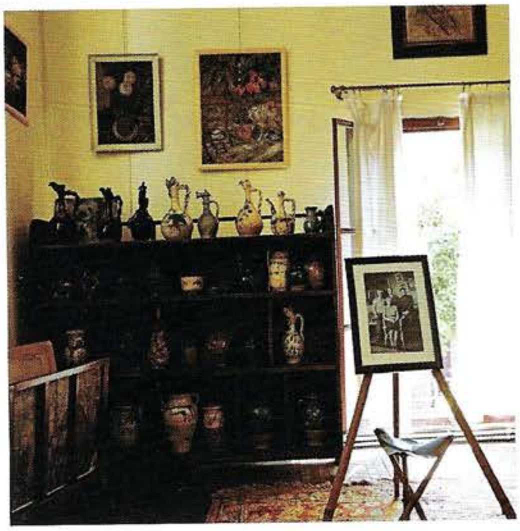
ABOVE: IT IS AS IF AT ANY MOMENT THE DURANS MIGHT STEP INTO THE AIRY STUDIO WHERE THEY PAINTED FOR ALMOST FORTY YEARS; THEIR PAINTBRUSHES STILL STAND READY FOR USE. FRENCH WINDOWS LEAD ONTO A BALCONY LOOKING ACROSS THE SMALL GARDEN TO THEIR HOUSE.
RIGHT: SHELVES OF PLASTER CASTS IN THE STUDIO ENTRANCE

He was, by all accounts, a gentle and inspired teacher, less concerned with correction than with opening his students' eyes. Though he taught his students how to observe the world around them, he urged them to ground their work in the spirit. From 1919 he taught at the newly established Fine Arts Academy for Girls, moving on to the Fine Arts Academy when it opened its doors to painters of both sexes eight years later.

In 1922 he married one of his students, Güzin Hanım, who would paint at his side for the rest of his life. They would spend most of those years in the little jewel of a house that Güzin Hanım inherited from her grandfather, a famous calligrapher. It was, perhaps, because they understood their life together







as their greatest work of art that they bequeathed the house and all its contents to Istanbul University.

Though the restoration work began soon after Güzin Hanım's death in 1981, it was not until 2001 that the house opened its doors to the public. But it was well worth the wait. Tucked away in a tiny *meydan* in Süleymaniye, sandwiched between the Institute of Social Sciences and the Economic Faculty, it soothes the eyes, reminding the visitor that there is more to life than brutalism. A classical column sits at the centre of its small walled garden. At one end is the small but handsome Ottoman house, ingeniously divided into reception rooms and private quarters, with a separate staircase leading to the rooms where a lodger lived on the top floor. At

ABOVE: THOUGH FAMOUS FOR HIS PORTRAITS, FEYHAMAN ENJOYED PAINTING LANDSCAPES. ON THE EASEL IN THE STUDIO IS A 1953 STUDY OF ANADOLU HISARI. ON THE WALLS ARE SKETCHES OF THE PRINCES ISLANDS AND TOPKAPI PALACE. IN THE FOREGROUND IS THE STOOL ON WHICH FEYHAMAN SAT TO PAINT THEM. LEFT: THE CHUNKY ÇANAKKALE POTTERY ON THE BOOKCASE OFTEN APPEARS IN HIS WORK FROM THE 1930S AND 1940S; FLOWER PAINTINGS COVER THE WALLS the other is the two-storey Art Deco studio where husband and wife painted together for almost forty years. In both house and studio, old and new sit side by side, complementing each other with an almost capricious grace. In the bedroom, a kilim hangs on one side of a gilt mirror. Hanging on the other side is a nude, possibly of Güzin. Next to the Louis XV chair, and underneath the marble-topped dressing table, is a collection of Ottoman ceramic vases. Though the slippers underneath the French bed date from the Fifties, they look as if the wearer left them there only seconds ago. Throughout the house, Feyhaman's paintings share walls with Persian miniatures, copper trays, Kütahya tiles, Karagöz puppet and works of calligraphy by Güzin's grandfather. There is hardly a still life without an Ottoman pattern in the background.

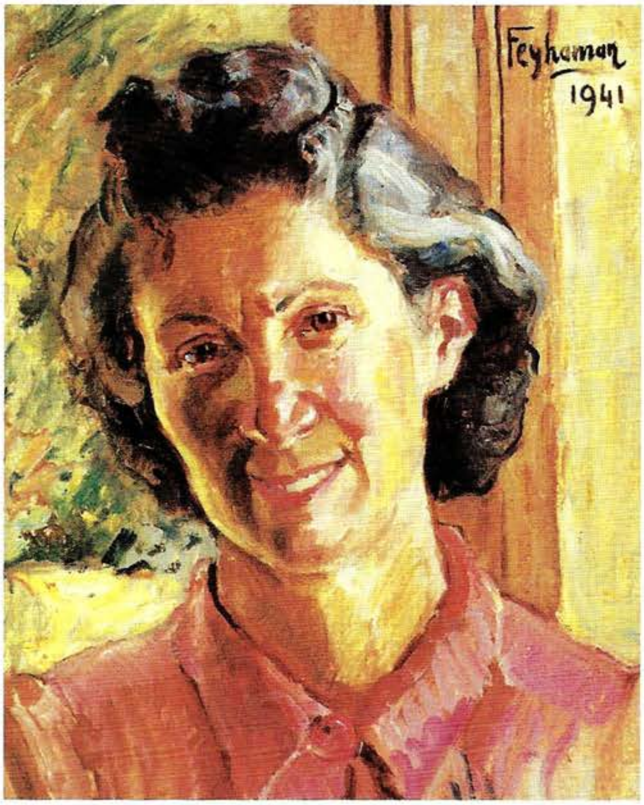
While the great thinkers of the day were consumed and sometimes destroyed by the competing claims of tradition and modernity, Feyhaman Duran saw no reason to take sides. His love of modern art did not stop him appreciating Ottoman art. "I love the line as much as I love pictures," he once said. "The line is itself a picture… In much the same way that a poem can contain a rhyme, a line can contain a poem."

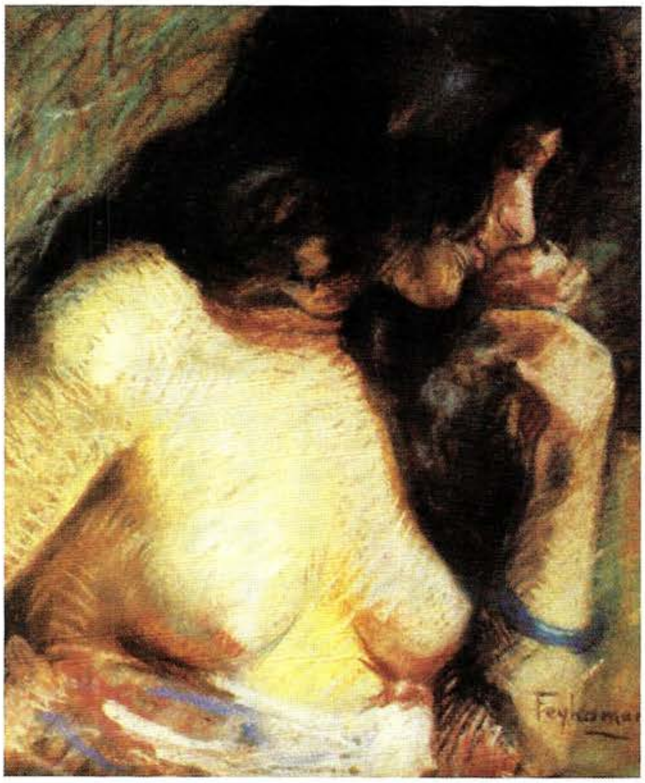
His generosity of spirit is most evident in his landscapes. When pressed, he confessed to an endless love for nature, accepting all that came from it, and discriminating against nothing. He hated picking flowers: it felt as bad as cutting men's heads off. "I only paint them," he said.

Perhaps because he liked to work in the open air, he has left us a legacy of summer views. Some show us the shores of the Princes Islands; others the changing lights and colours of the Bosphorus as seen through the windows of a house in Anadoluhisarı. In almost every one he draws the eye out of shade into light. It is when one looks at many of his paintings in quick succession that one begins to understand what art meant to him.

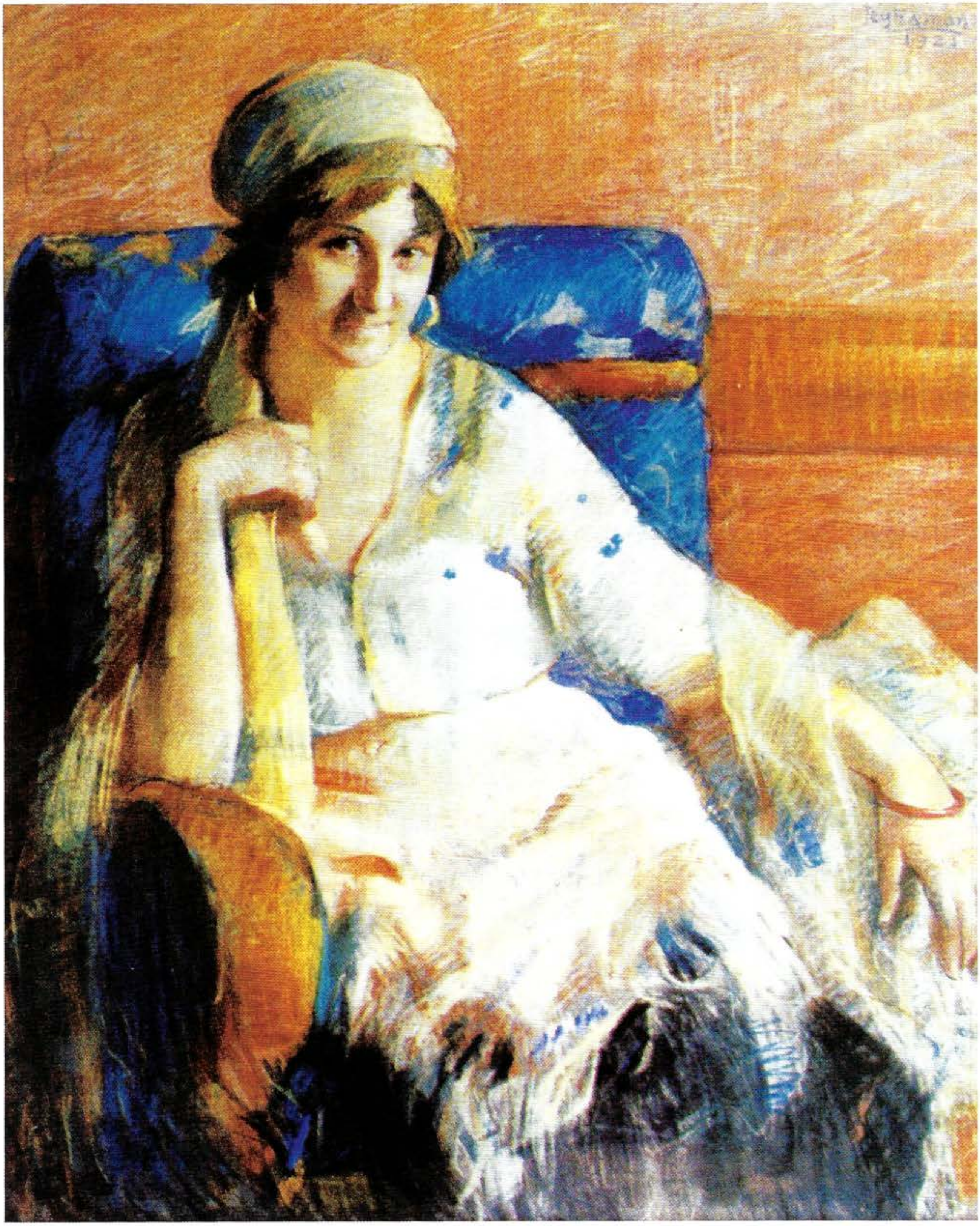
Though he enjoyed much good fortune in his life – an elite education, a generous patron, a loving wife, generations of devoted students, the respect of his peers, a place at the centre of the artistic establishment, and a house where he could celebrate beauty in his own distinct way – there was also much hardship. He was orphaned at a very young age. As a young man, he again had happiness ripped away from him when, almost overnight, he became an enemy alien in his beloved Paris. Back in Istanbul, he experienced at first hand all the hardships of wartime, and all the humiliations of defeat.

There was no family money to fall back on. Throughout his life he had to earn his keep as an artist, in a country where many viewed art as an unnecessary luxury. But there is no evidence that he ever complained. Not even in his last paintings, when his sight began to fail him, do we

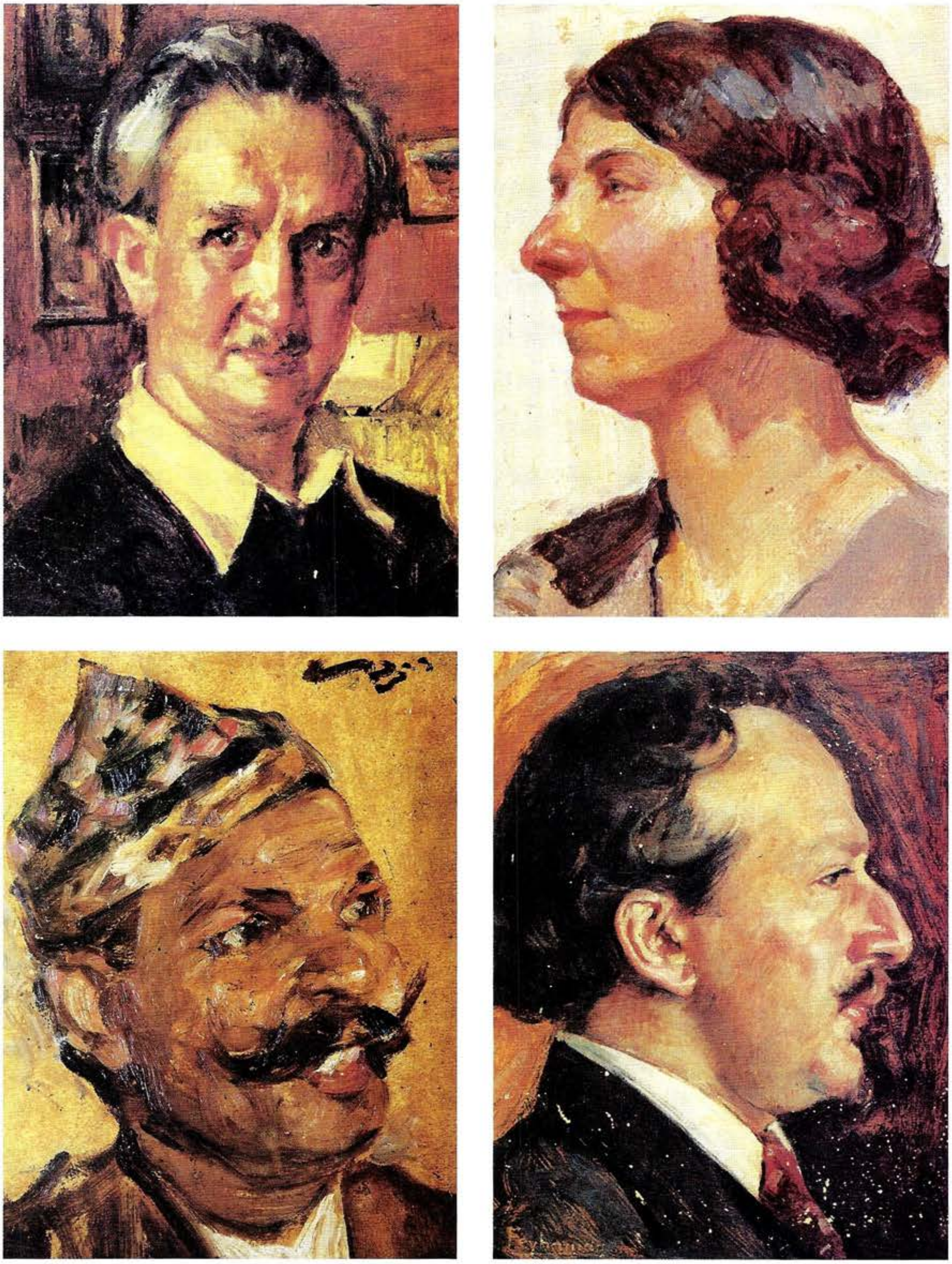




Güzin was Feyhaman's muse. Top left: Feyhaman's affectionate likeness of Güzin painted in 1941. Right: this gently smiling portrait of her in costume,



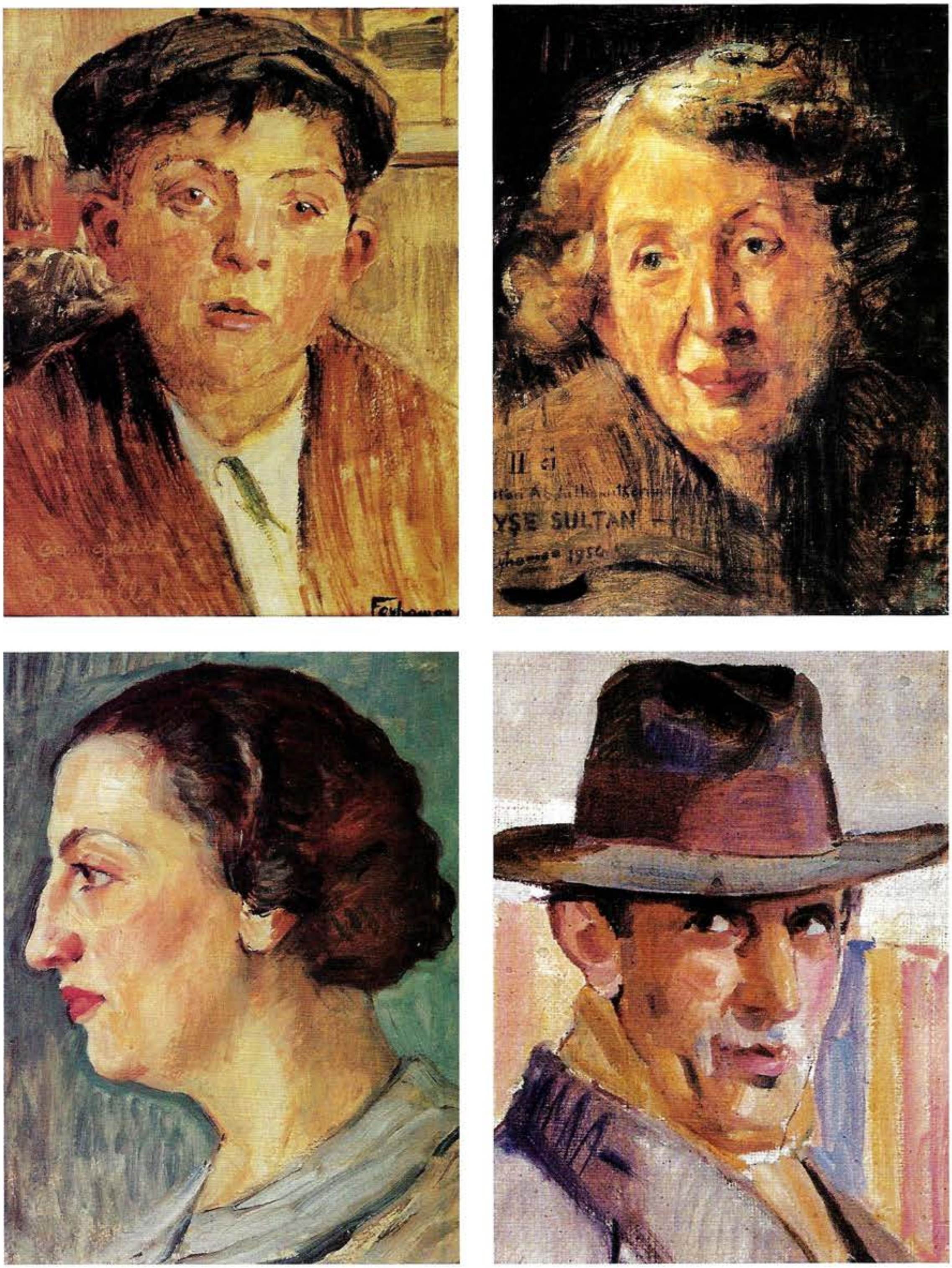
PAINTED IN 1921, THE YEAR BEFORE THEY MARRIED, HANGS IN THE BEDROOM, OPPOSITE THE IMPRESSIONISTIC PASTEL (BOTTOM LEFT) OF A NUDE SMELLING A ROSE



Clockwise from top left: self-portrait of Feyhaman, 1946; Güzin painted by Feyhaman, also in 1946; the composer Şerif Muhittin Targan, 1933; Barber Hasan on Heybeliada, one of the Princes Islands, in 1915

see the surge of hope lessening. Instead we see a celebration of colour – which he once described as being as sweet to him as sugar. We see an electric fire burning bright, and a burning house lighting up the Bosphorus at night. In the first we feel the cold of an Ottoman house in winter. In the second we wonder if it is another beautiful old yalı that has gone up in smoke, and if these owners, too, have torched it to make way for an ugly apartment house.

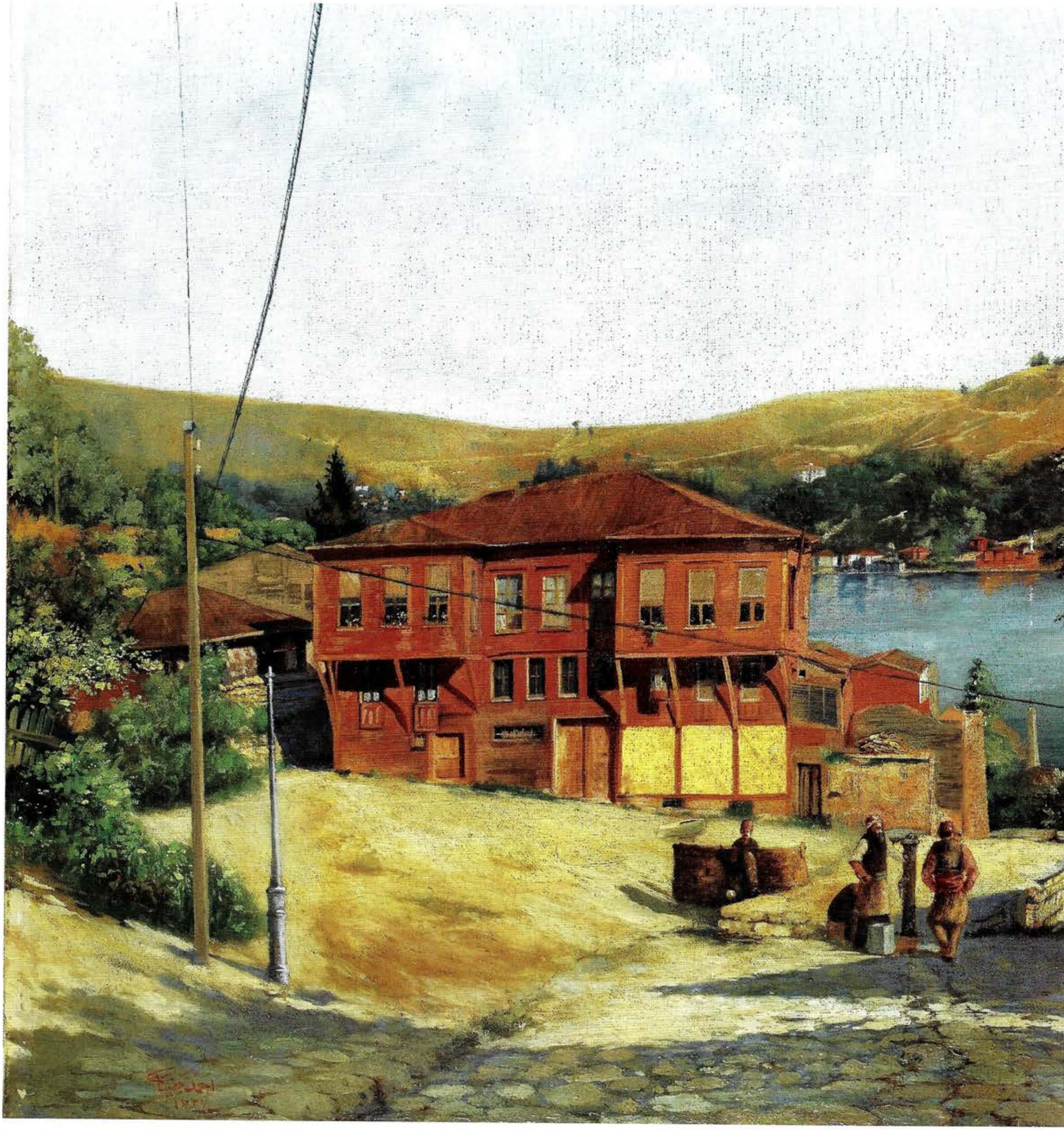
Looking at the portraits, we sense hidden depths. We warm to some of his subjects and pull away from others. Feyhaman was fond of telling his students that artists were only original in so far as they built from their own foundations; what rests at the foundation of his own work is, almost by definition, impossible to put into words. "In certain things, there is no line – only



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ÇANGIRILI ABDULLAH, 1946; AYŞE SULTAN, DAUGHTER OF SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II AND A FAMOUS DIARIST, IN 1954; İBRAHIM ÇALLI, A FELLOW MEMBER OF THE '1914 GENERATION'; THE SINGER MUAZZEZ KÖSEOĞLU

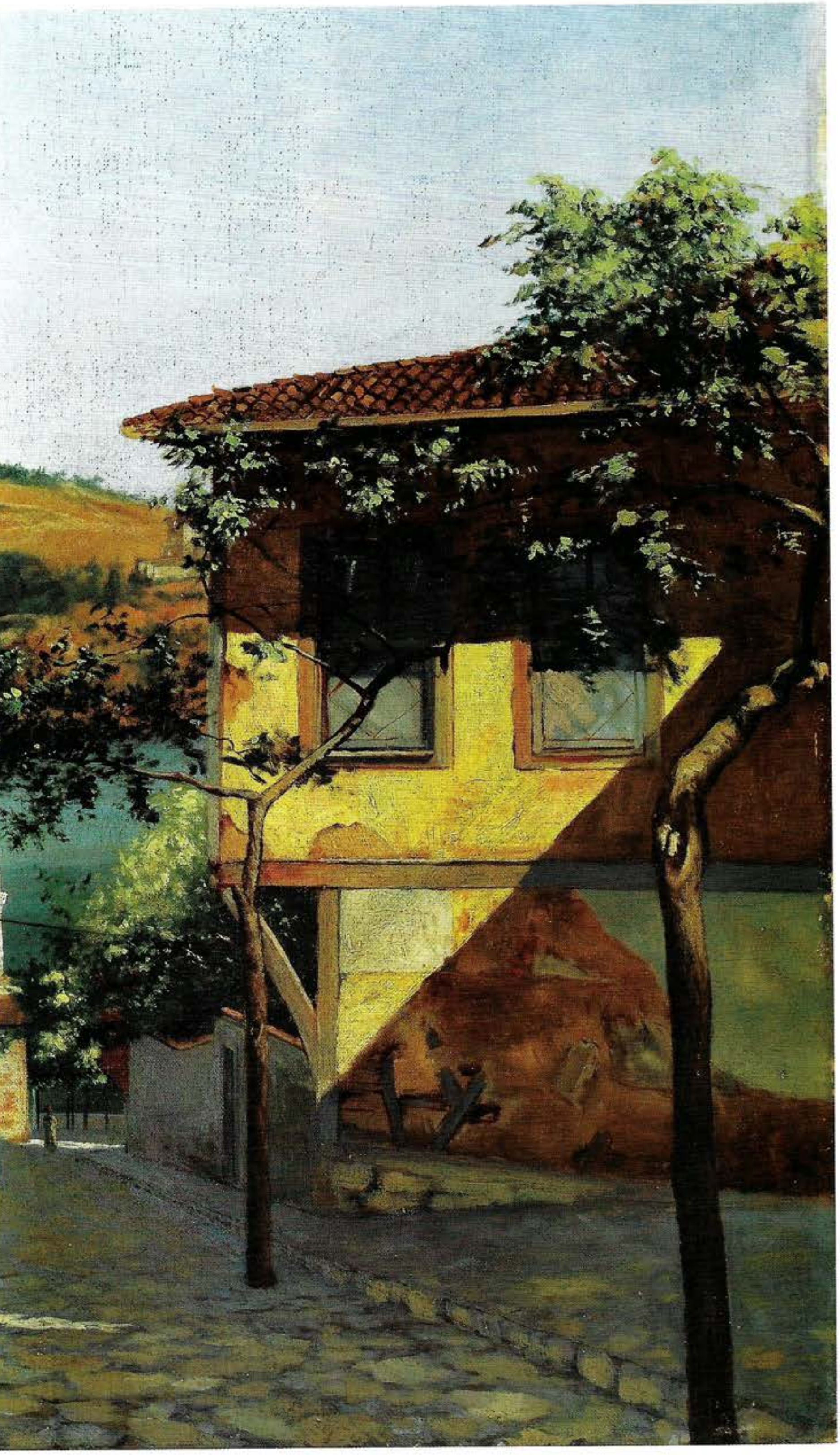
colour. There are no words – only a melody. Art has a great deal to do with that which cannot be said." Or rather, it is about conveying the full force of the unsaid. It has been three years since I visited the permanent collection of Feyhaman and Güzin Duran at Istanbul University. It was on the same distant day that I paid my only visit to their house. But I am forever returning to its rooms in my mind, most especially when I am in a cold and rainy land, far from Istanbul. Whenever I feel despair encroaching, I revisit his paintings to find my way out. ◆

Feyhaman Duran's works are exhibited on the top floor of the rectorate of Istanbul University in Beyazıt Square. The Durans' house (Taşodalar Sok 22, by the side gate to the university gardens) is open during office hours (+90 212 440 0000, ext 11425). The Department of Fine Arts has published a catalogue of the entire bequest



AHMET ZİYA AKBULUT
1869–1938

Men collect water from a well in front of a classic oxblood-painted mansion in Bebek, on the European shore of the Bosphorus. On the opposite shore are the white Kıbrıslı Yalı and the dark red Ostrorog Yalı. Another painting by Ahmet Ziya (opposite) shows an exquisitely carved caique next to another wooden house. A graduate of the naval academy on Heybeliada, Ahmet Ziya went on to study under Hoca Ali Rıza, the mentor of the '1914 generation'. Ahmet Ziya was renowned for his interest in mathematics and astronomy, and for his mastery of perspective, which he taught to art students.



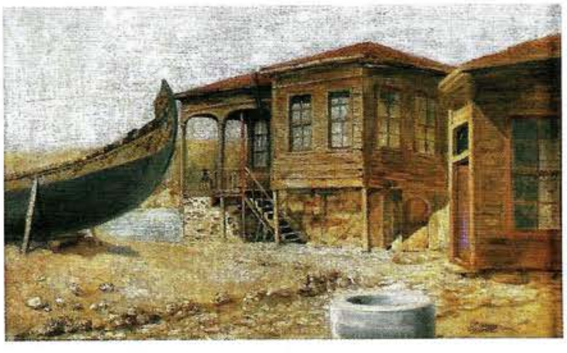
Sakıp Sabancı Museum

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

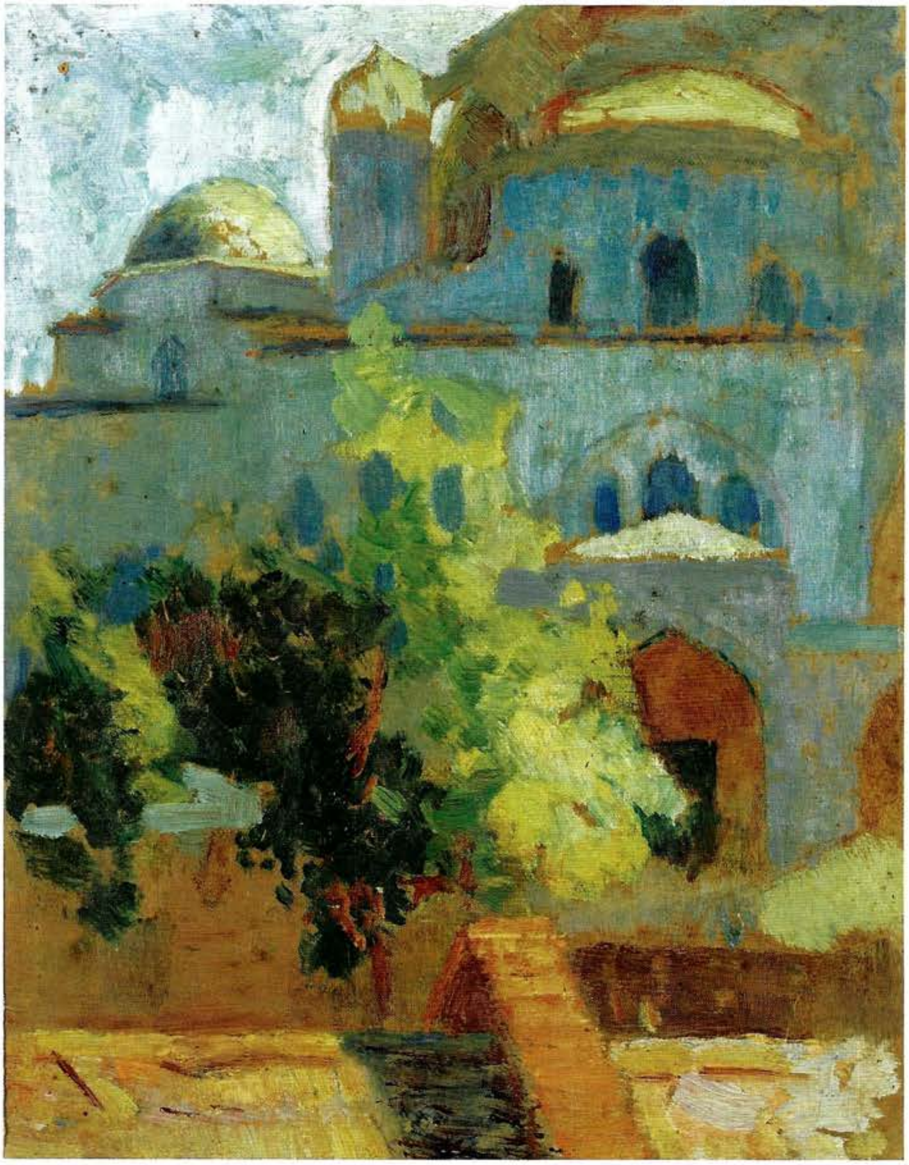
The work of Feyhaman Duran and his contemporaries, once dismissed as unfashionably figurative, is now attracting renewed interest. A recent exhibition at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum in Istanbul celebrated their work. The first Turkish painters to work in the Western manner, this group of artists – known as the '1914 generation' – often learnt their craft at military academies, which prized topographical skills. They all, to a man, went on to study in Paris, and, like the French Impressionists, they painted *en plein air*, capturing the fleeting moods of Istanbul's landscapes. Berrin Torolsan selects some of her favourites from the exhibition

△ ISTANBUL, 1918
BY AHMET ZİYA AKBULUT
Oil on canvas, 62.5 x 92 cm

▷ WOODEN HOUSE,
BY AHMET ZİYA AKBULUT
Oil on board, 30 x 44 cm



Lüset–Mustafa Tavıloğlu Collection



ALL PAINTINGS: SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM

HÜSEYİN AVNİ LİFİJ

1886–1927
◁ MOSQUE, 1918
Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 cm

Avni Lifij's Impressionist studies of mosques and kiosks are the most beautiful of all the work produced by the 1914 school. The influential archaeologist and Orientalist Osman Hamdi was instrumental in furthering the artist's career: he persuaded the future caliph Abdülmecid, himself a talented painter, to send Avni Lifij, a Circassian-born French-speaker, to study in Paris.

HİKMET ONAT

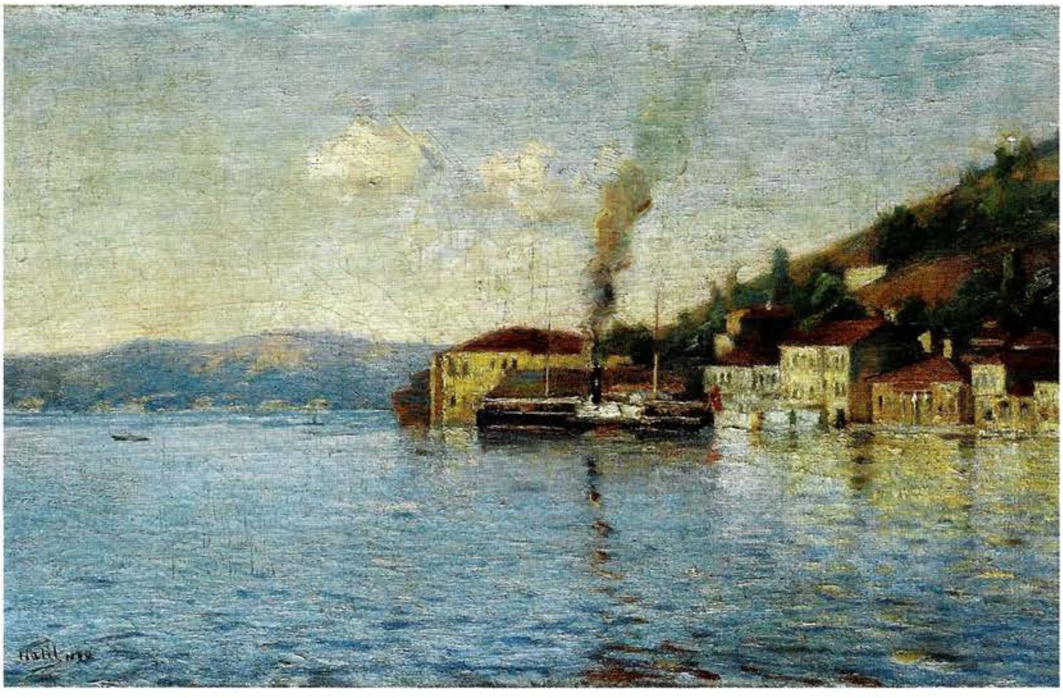
1882–1977
▷ ANKARA 1928
Oil on canvas, 80 x 95cm

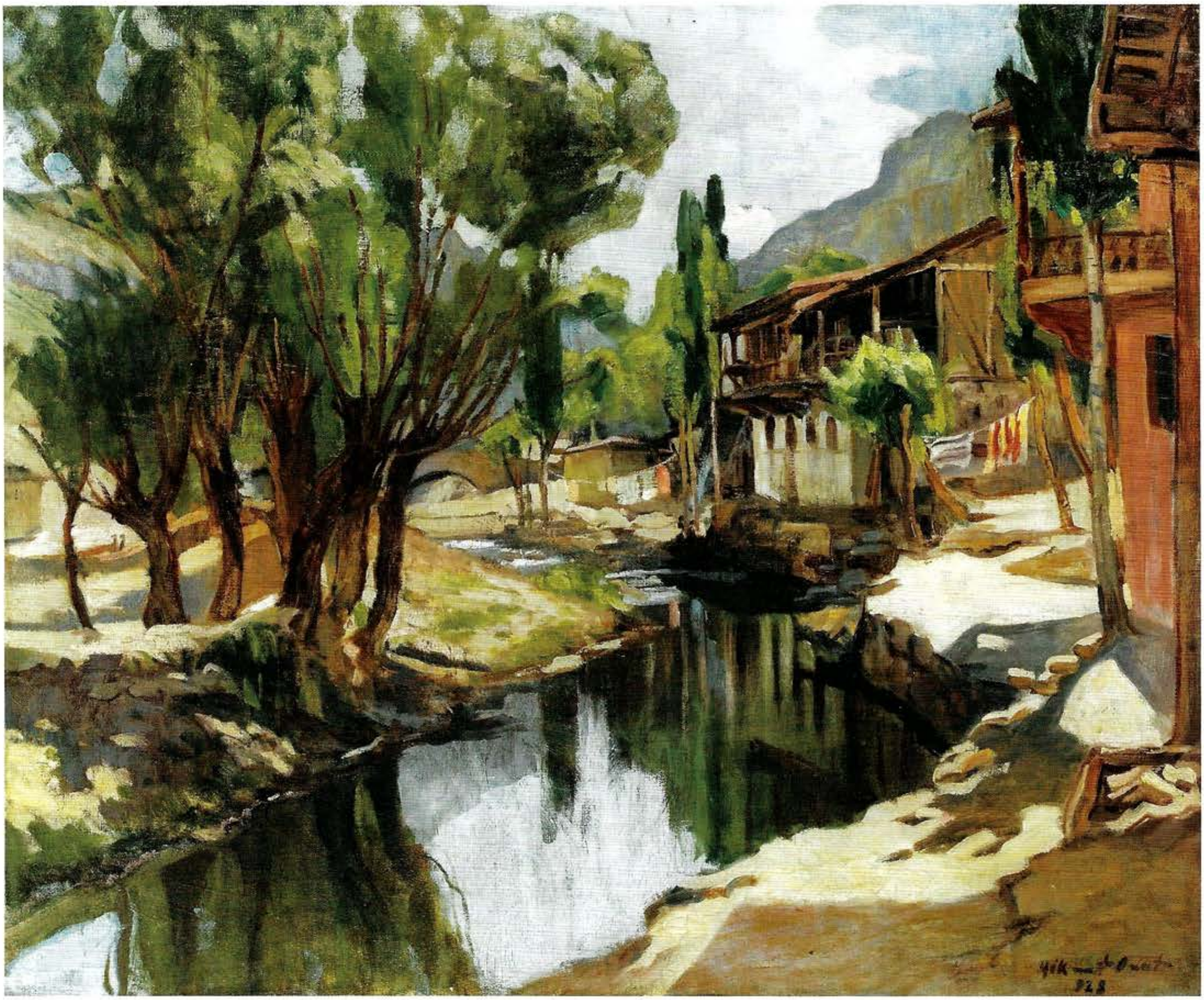
Hikmet Onat shows Ankara as a provincial Anatolian town before the age of concrete. The palette and broad brushwork recall Cézanne. Hikmet, another naval officer, enrolled in the Atelier Cormon in Paris, an art school for aspiring salon painters where Toulouse-Lautrec and Van Gogh had also studied, staying for four years. Onat returned in 1914 to take up a succession of teaching posts, entering the new Fine Arts Academy in 1922.

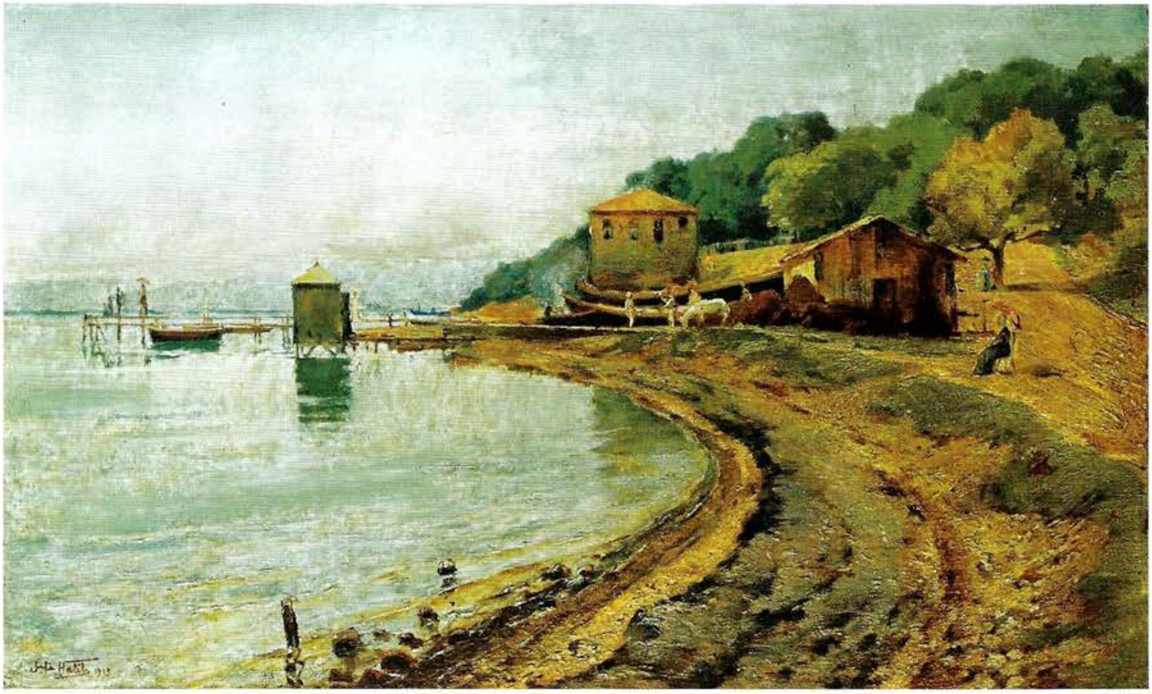
HALİL PASHA

1857–1939
▷ ÇENGELKÖY QUAY, 1890
Oil on canvas, 27.5 x 46.5 cm
▷▷ SEA HAMMAM (BATHING CABIN), BOSTANCI, 1913
Oil on canvas, 33.5 x 55.5 cm

An officer-artist, Halil Pasha was sent to Paris by the palace to study under the Orientalist Jean-Léon Gérôme and won a medal at the Paris Exposition of 1888. These shore scenes, one on the Bosphorus, the other on the Sea of Marmara, illustrate Halil Pasha's sense of light so admired by his compatriots. His figure paintings and portraits were more naive. He spent his last years at the court of Abbas Hilmi Pasha in Egypt.





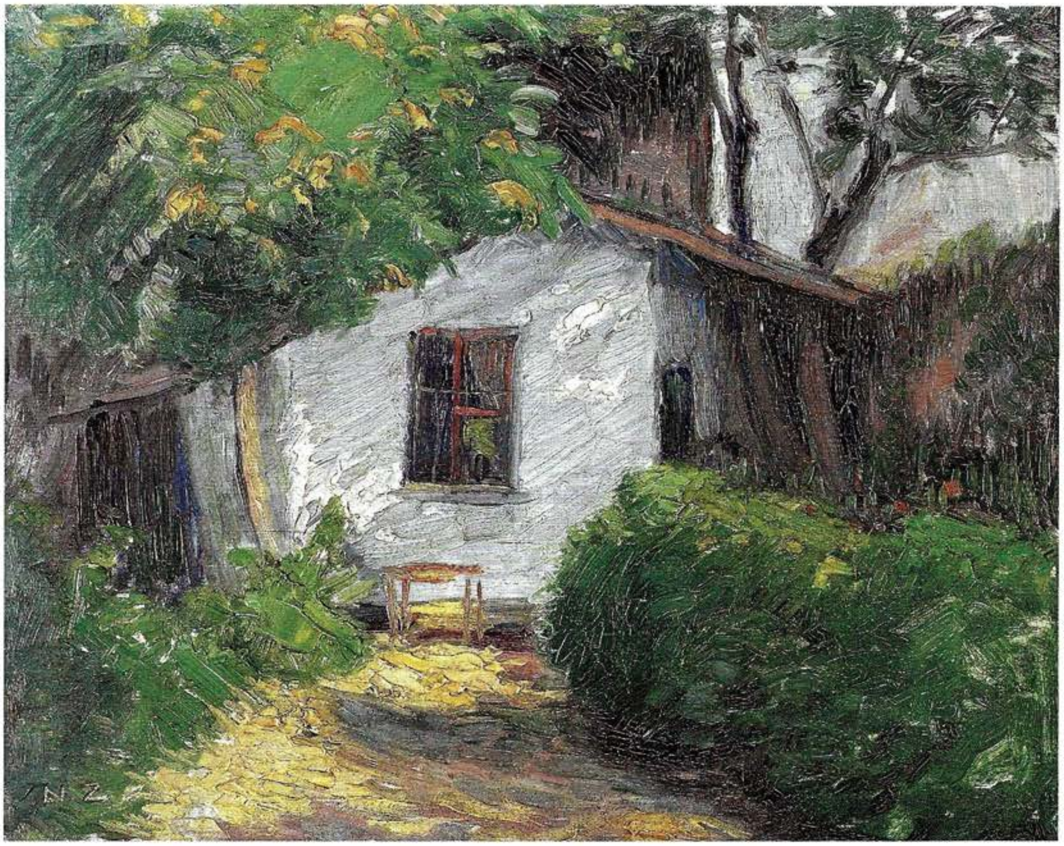


Nazmi Ziya Güran

1881–1937

▷ Garden house
Oil on canvas, 41 x 83 cm
▷ ▷ Karacaahmet Cemetery, Üsküdar, 1933
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm

Nazmi Ziya's father saw no future in painting and made him enter the civil service in 1901 before taking up art. Much mocked by his French tutor, his enthusiasm for Impressionism cost him a year at art school. As soon as he graduated, he left for Paris, working in various studios, including Corot's, and returned in 1913 with a French wife, to teach first in Izmir, then Istanbul. He became director of the Fine Arts Academy in 1918 and in 1926 was back in Paris to supervise a new generation of Turkish artists. Nazmi Ziya never lost his love of working from nature, often rising before dawn to catch the early morning light.

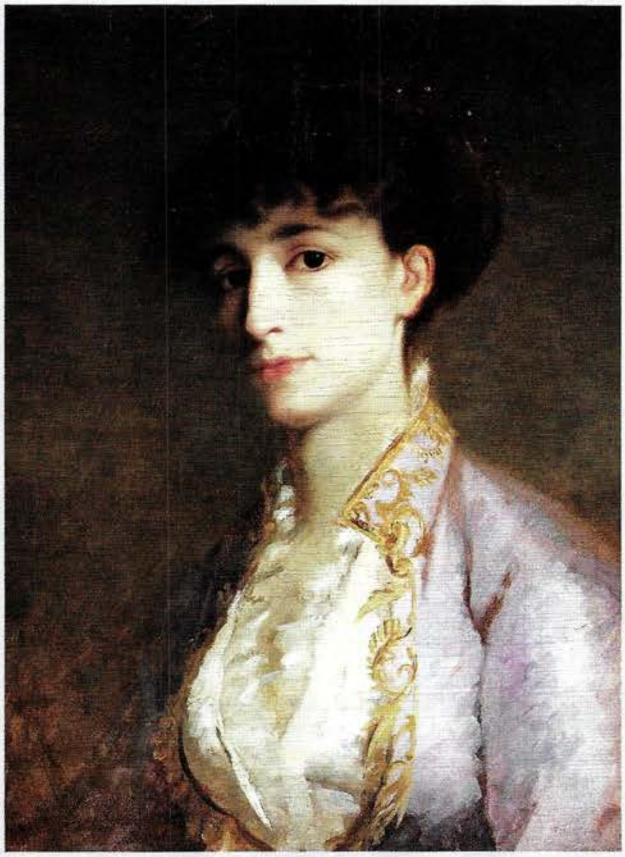


Osman Hamdi

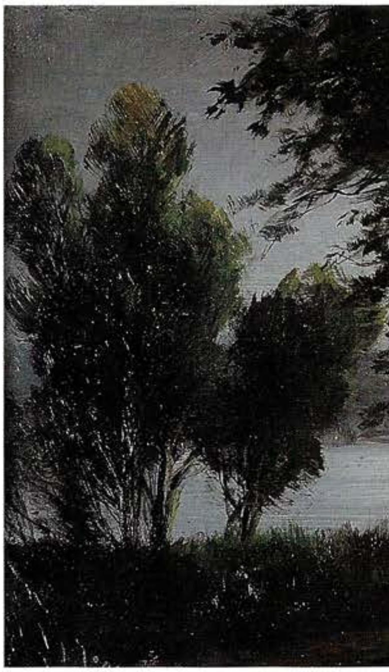
1842–1910

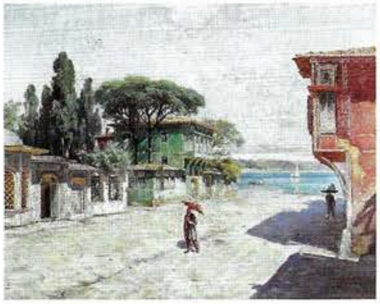
The work of Osman Hamdi, the only genuine Ottoman Orientalist, sets him apart from his contemporaries. A gifted archaeologist and founder of the Archaeological Museum, he was a highly accomplished painter, creating seamlessly crafted works that now fetch millions of dollars. Although he predates the "1914 generation", the exhibition at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum wisely included him, keeping him for last and picking works that displayed wit and taste as well as his love of the historical. An affectionate caricature of his contemporary, the portly Grand Vizier Ahmed Vefik Pasha, signed with exaggerated Art Nouveau initials, appeared alongside two portraits of his wife, Naile Hanım, one in profile, the other (right) dressed in shimmering silk.

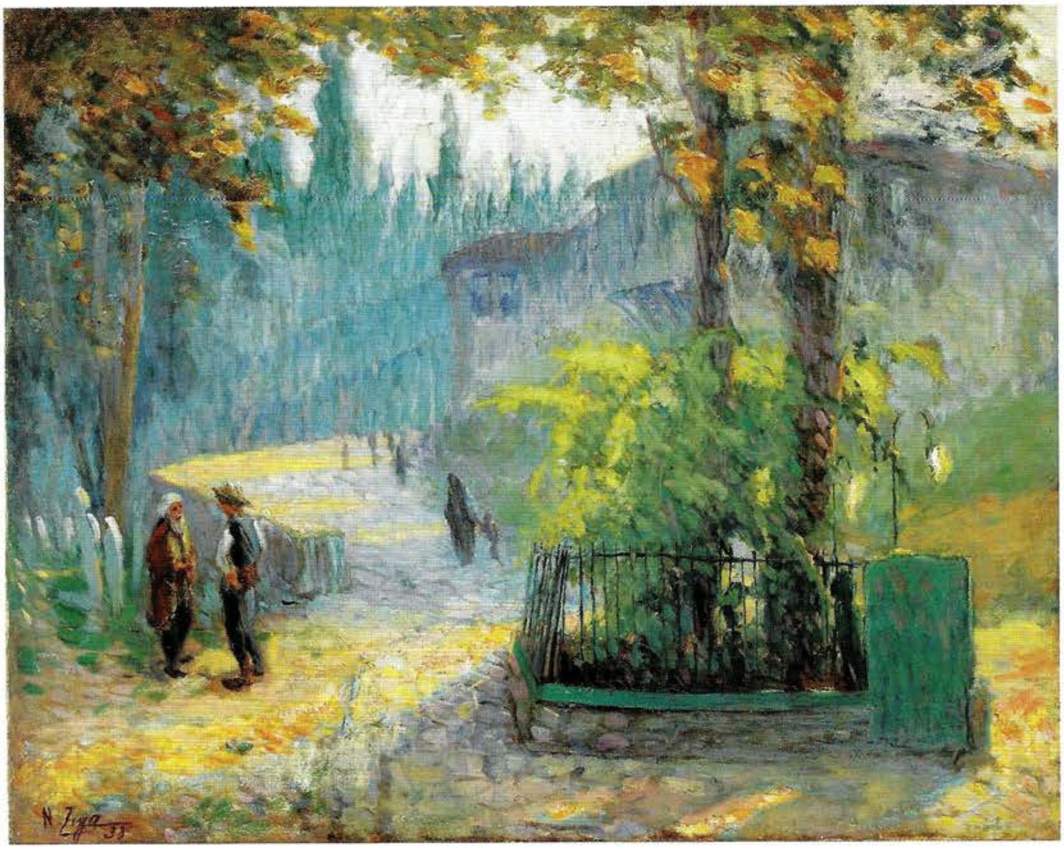
▷ Naile Hanım
Oil on canvas, 59 x 48.5 cm



Ferda-Ibrahim Ipeker Collection

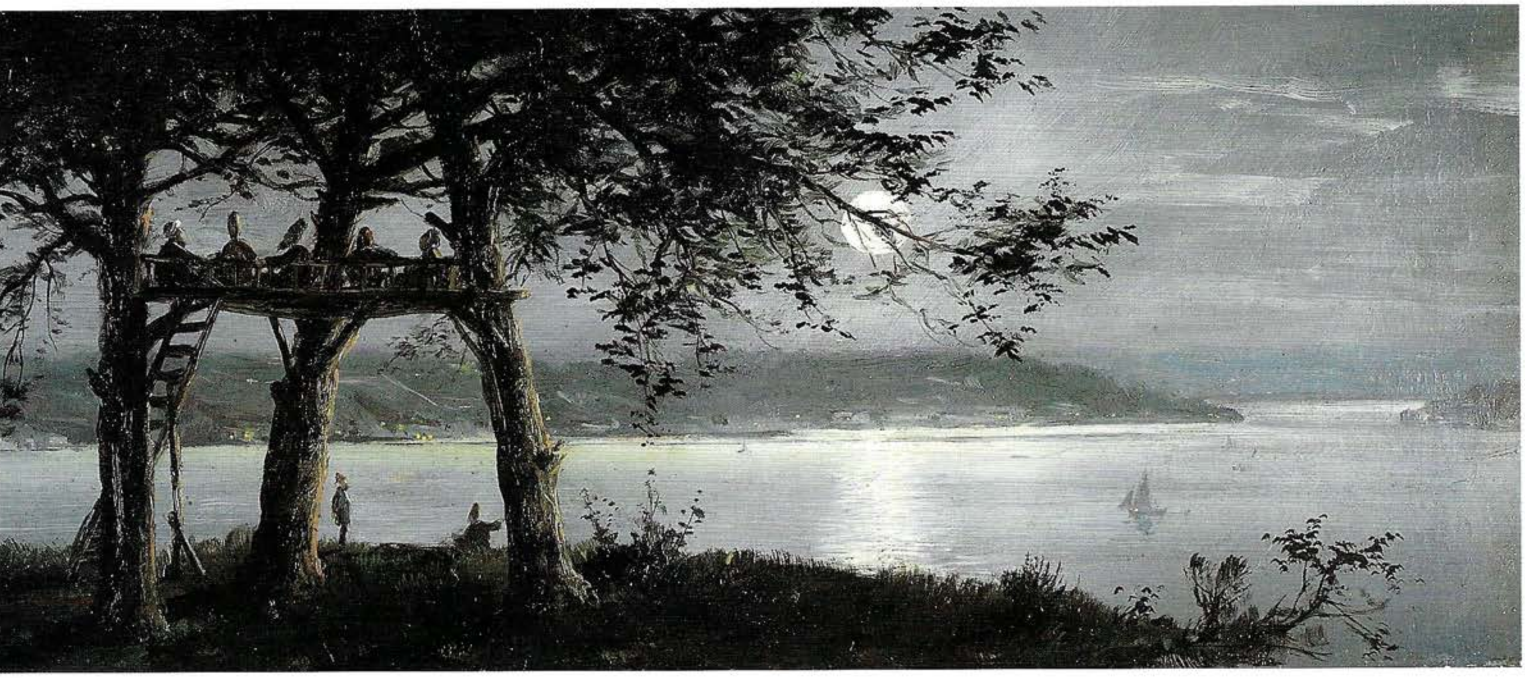


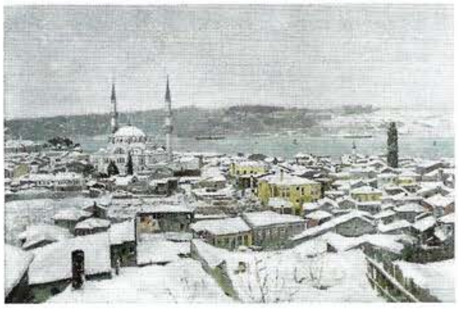




Sakıp Sabancı Museum

Exhibition catalogue
'Travel to the West – 70 years of Turkish Painting' was at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul, April – August 2009. The exhibition catalogue (Turkish only), 'Batıya Yolculuk – Türk Resminin 70 Yıllık Serüveni (1860-1930)', with essays by Ferit Edgü, Semra Germaner, Turan Erol and Edhem Eldem, is available from the museum website, price TL50: muze. sabanciuniv.edu/publication/





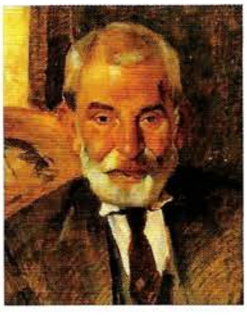
Lösev-Mustafa Tavıloğlu Collection

Hoca Ali Rıza

1864–1935

△ Conversing by Moonlight on the Bosphorus
Oil on canvas, 20 x 60.5 cm

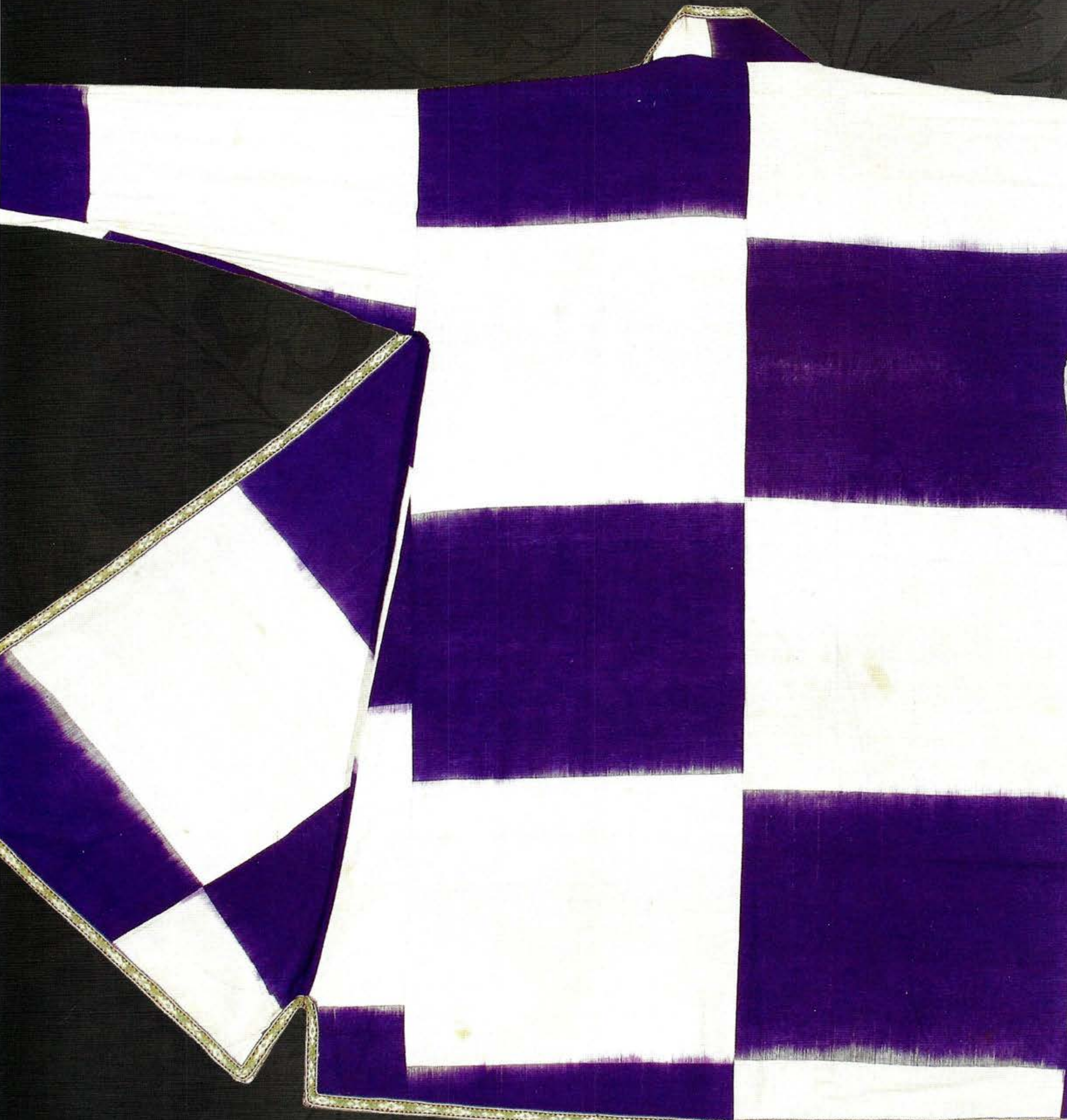
◁ Bottom row, from left: Beylerbeyi
Oil on canvas, 46 x 65 cm;
Üsküdar under snow
Oil on canvas, 54 x 81 cm



Istanbul University

◁ Hoca Ali Rıza by his pupil Feyhaman Duran
Oil on canvas, 54 x 81cm

If Osman Hamdi made art respectable, it was Hoca Ali Rıza who taught the "1914 generation" to paint. A man of huge charm passionately in love with his city, he captured it in snow and sun, and even in moonlight.



Ikat chapan, early 20th century, Uzbekistan

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MOTHER OF THE UIGHURS

The Turkic Uighurs of western China have long chafed under Communist Chinese rule. Christian Tyler meets their formidable new figurehead, Rebiya Kadeer, who spent five years in prison for protesting against her people's treatment and now carries on the fight for freedom from Washington. Portrait by Ashley Gilbertson

She stood, like some exotic bird, on the platform of a hall in a rundown part of the City of London. She seemed quite out of place here, a slight figure with a brown face, intense dark eyes and a hawk nose. From under a small embroidered beret, the badge of her nation, her greying hair fell in long plaits down her back. Her demeanour reminded me of those proud American Indian squaws you see in 19th-century photographs.

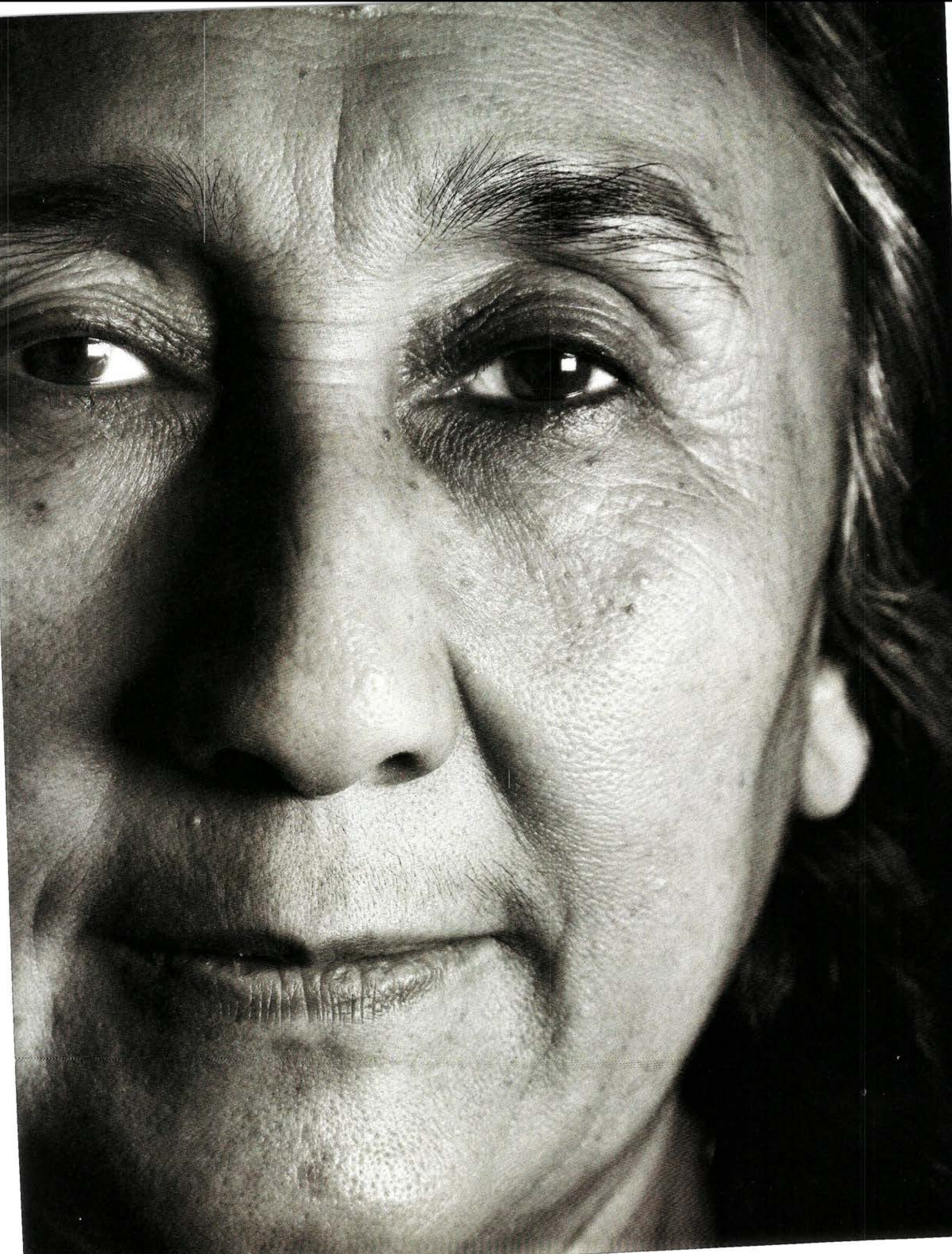
Rebiya Kadeer was lamenting the fate of her two sons, sentenced to long prison terms in China in retaliation for speeches like this one, her protest against China's treatment of her people. Rebiya knows what prison means: she spent five and a half years in jail for daring to criticise the Communist regime, long weeks and months of it in solitary confinement, sitting on a stool in a dark, bare cell measuring six foot by five.

The voice was strong, clear and full of emotion. But she spoke in a language that probably not a single member of her audience could understand. The young man interpreting for her was doing his best. But when her voice rose and the tears began to flow, all he could do was to recite the bare facts.

The tears flowed, but her voice did not falter. This woman once owned a multimillion-dollar business empire, and sat in the highest councils of Communist China. She is the self-proclaimed "Mother of the Uighurs", the eight million indigenous Turkic people of China's vast northwestern province of Xinjiang (which Uighurs call Eastern Turkestan).

The Uighurs' Turkic ancestry – the most identifiable of several ethnic elements – links them by language, custom and (since the 12th century) religion with the Central Asians and ultimately with the Ottoman Turks of modern Turkey.

Rebiya Kadeer: 'total self-belief and an almost foolhardy courage'



'They do not understand why many Uighurs regard China not as their motherland but as the invader which has swamped their homeland with the Han, seized their farmland and scarce water, taken their jobs and removed their natural resources'

Largely unknown except to China-watchers, Rebiya Kadeer was this year catapulted into the international limelight, largely thanks to the people who most fear her influence, the top brass of the Chinese Communist Party.

They achieved this propaganda own-goal by accusing her, implausibly, of organising from her exile in Washington DC the ethnic clashes which erupted in Urumchi, provincial capital of Xinjiang, at the beginning of July 2009. The proximate cause of the protest was the murder of two (possibly more) Uighurs in far-distant Guangdong province. How and why the Urumchi rampage began has not been established, but according to the official account more than 180 people, more of them Han than Uighur, were killed. Many thousands of Uighurs were arrested.

Three weeks later the rulers compounded their mistake by trying to prevent a documentary of Rebiya's life being shown at a film festival in Melbourne, Australia. The screening was sold out, and the papers were full of the story.

Indeed, the party has succeeded in promoting Rebiya Kadeer to a status matched only by that other ethnic minority leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of the Tibetans, or by Aung San Suu Kyi, the imprisoned daughter of Burma's democratic hero. The Chinese have unwittingly provided the two million Uighurs of the diaspora with the political figurehead they have long lacked and the Uighurs inside China, chafing under Communist Party rule, with a colourful champion of their long-felt grievances.

At first it is difficult to imagine how this woman could be seen as such a threat. I first met her two years ago on a visit to England with her husband, Sidik Rouzi. She greeted me with typical Uighur courtesy, and some complimentary remarks about my interest in her country. I had arranged for her to meet MPs and peers at the House of Lords the following day.

It was hard to say who were the more baffled, the parliamentarians confronted by this exotic figure with scarcely a word of English, or the visitors, by the imperial mock-Gothic splendour of the Palace of Westminster. Rebiya gazed admiringly at the carved and gilded rooms with their tapestried scenes of mediaeval pageantry, and the golden throne in the Lords debating chamber. She made a joke in Uighur to her husband, and I asked the interpreter to translate: "Instead of occupying Hong Kong," she had said, "why didn't the British come and occupy us?" (In the 19th century, as it happens, the thought did cross their minds, as a way of keeping Russia at arm's length from their Indian empire).

In the meeting afterwards Rebiya explained why the Uighurs regarded Chinese rule as an "occupation" of their land, and the ways in which she said the Han were seeking to dilute or destroy Uighur history and culture. But it was clear that the recently chosen head of the World Uighur Congress, a body which attempts to represent the diaspora, was not politically adept. She found it hard to say whether the WUC was seeking civil rights and equal treatment for Uighurs or something greater: whether that meant autonomy

ON HER WAY TO BECOMING THE RICHEST WOMAN IN CHINA, REBIYA IN HER OFFICE IN HER WOMEN'S BAZAAR IN URUMCHI IN THE LATE 1980S. 'IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO CROSS THE BORDER BETWEEN RICH AND POOR SINCE I KNEW BOTH WORLDS WELL,' SHE HAS WRITTEN. FREQUENT CONFISCATIONS DID NOT PREVENT HER BUILDING A TRADE EMPIRE FROM EASTERN CHINA ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA. BUT EVEN HER ENTREPRENEURIAL KINSMEN WERE SHOCKED THAT SHE DID NOT STAY AT HOME TO BRING UP HER CHILDREN (11 IN ALL) in some federal China or full independence. Nor did she suggest what might induce China's rulers to relax their iron grip on Eastern Turkestan.

What she does have, however, is a single-minded determination, total self-belief, and an almost foolhardy courage. Rebiya gets under the skin of China's autocrats because she refused to be co-opted into the system – unlike many successful Uighurs – and repaid their efforts to woo her with insistent demands for an improvement in the Uighurs' lot. They see her, and other Uighur nationalists, as traitors who wish to "split the motherland", who undermine the racial harmony which they claim – more from wishful thinking than actual observation – prevails in Xinjiang. They do not understand why many Uighurs regard China not as their motherland but as the invader which has swamped their homeland with the Han, seized their farmland and scarce water, taken their jobs and removed their natural resources of oil and gas, coal and precious metals.

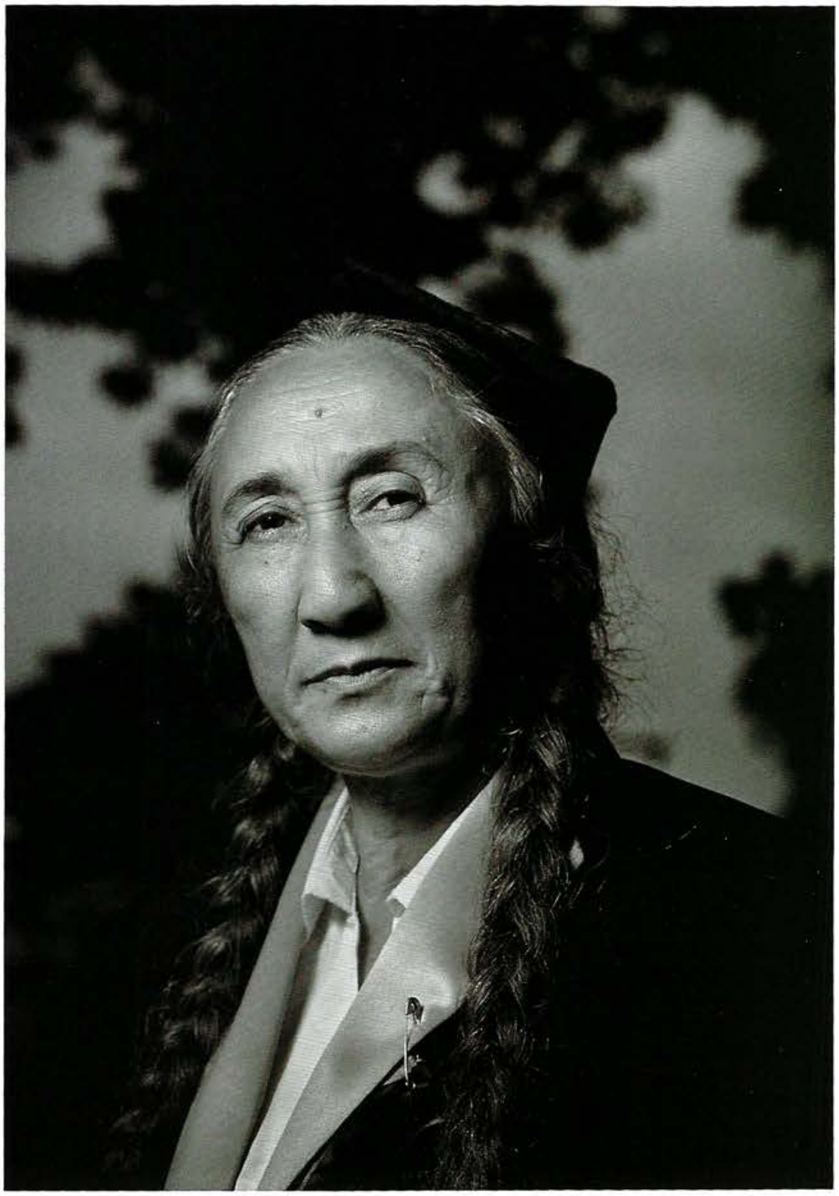
Rebiya, who knows the volatility of her people and the danger of crowds out of control, insists that she opposes all violence, that her enemies are not the Han Chinese ("Han" is a political rather than ethnic term) but their rulers. The accusation that she fomented the July riot is apparently based on phone calls she made to her family in Urumchi before the protest. Rebiya says she rang to warn them to stay indoors, knowing from her contacts that trouble was brewing following the Guangdong murders.

Behind this lies the fear which has haunted China's emperors down the centuries, that the country will break up, and their power with it. The same fear may explain why civil strife inside China is routinely blamed on outsiders, and why Han nationalism (or "Great Han Chauvinism", as Mao used to call it) is whipped up when people of a "primitive" culture like the Uighurs assert themselves. The Han are taught to regard the Uighurs as unreliable citizens, Islamic fanatics and – since September 11, 2001 – as "terrorists".

More convincing is to see the Uighurs as victims of their geography, sharing as they do borders with the newly independent states of Central Asia – with which they have ethnic, linguistic and religious ties – and with volatile Pakistan. China's strategists are understandably worried that the influence of Islamic militants will reach inside their territory; yet the ruthlessness of their preventive measures only makes revolt more likely.

Rebiya's time in jail almost broke her physically, but mentally it turned her from a domestic champion of her people into an uncompromising political dissident. She has the classic temperament of the dissident (rare even in the nastiest of totalitarian regimes) – someone prepared to sacrifice her own welfare and even that of her family in pursuit of a higher cause. In her autobiography, first published in Germany and this year republished in English, she is candid about her nature – confrontational, unyielding, manipulative, even obsessive – and the weaknesses which make her so strong. Just how obstinate and indomitable she can be is demonstrated by her career.

She was born into a poor village family in the northern Altai region of the province, traditionally the home of the Kazakhs, in 1946. After the Communist Revolution she was forcibly removed, with her mother and siblings, to Aksu on the edge of the fearsome Taklamakan sand desert, in the predominantly



Ashley Gilbertson / VII Network

Uncompromising politically, Rebiya Kadeer is the latest in a long line of Uighur heroines. Here she proudly wears the badge of her nation, an embroidered beret, or 'doppa', over long plaits of greying hair

Uighur south. There, as a teenager, she was reluctantly married, bore her first six children and took in three of her young siblings. During the Cultural Revolution, the licensed persecution which in other parts of China was directed against intellectuals and other categories of "filth", was in Xinjiang used to persecute Uighurs and other minorities. Rebiya suffered her share of public humiliation, sometimes with her children forced to look on. She left the stormy marriage and fended for herself, making clothes and taking in laundry to feed her children, until discovering the magic of trade.

Uighurs are natural traders. You cannot go into a public place without some youth offering to buy your jacket or your watch, and Rebiya quickly discovered an aptitude for it, buying large consignments – sheepskins, timber – in one part of the province and selling them in another. Ignoring the rebukes of her kinsmen, who told her that a woman's place was at home with her children, she extended her range, buying up fabric and other goods in eastern China for sale in the Uighur markets. And when the Soviet Union collapsed and the border with Central Asia was opened, she was quick to take advantage of it.

She married Sidik Rouzi, a handsome, bookish man who had served a jail term for criticising the government, and with whom she had another five children. They moved to Urumchi, where he took a job as a university teacher and began writing critical articles. When it became clear that in the post-Tiananmen atmosphere he was in danger of re-arrest, Rebiya persuaded him to go to the US, where she promised to join him. Instead, she pressed on with major projects, bribing officials to get the necessary permissions. First came a women's bazaar on a derelict site in the city; then a seven-storey department store, a second, bigger store, and a general trading network with manufacturing in Kazakhstan. She became the seventh richest person in China and the richest woman, a model of the new "capitalism with Chinese characteristics". She set up philanthropic organisations for Uighur women, orphans and the urban unemployed. Stories about her appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* and she was visited by America's business gurus Warren Buffett and Bill Gates.

In 1997, as a member of China's top advisory body, the National People's Political Consultative Conference, Rebiya raised the Uighurs' grievances in a speech at the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square. She says that President Li Peng congratulated her; that other leaders assured her privately things would be made better and that, naively, she believed them.

Before her imprisonment, Rebiya used her millions to set up philanthropic societies for Uighur women, the unemployed and the many children orphaned during the purges of the mostly Turkic minorities – Kazakh, Kirghiz and Uzbek, as well as Uighur. Rebiya's own brother Jumak was a Mongolian boy adopted after losing his parents when he was six. Her father bribed his guards not to execute him

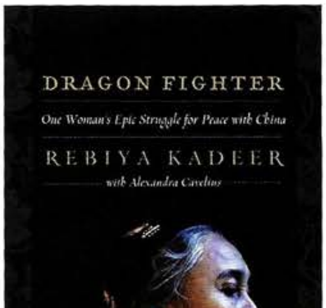
In 1999, on the way to meet a visiting US Congressional delegation, Rebiya was arrested and charged with betraying state secrets: clippings from local newspapers she was about to send to Sidik in Washington. In jail, she escaped torture, but expected the death penalty – Xinjiang is believed to be one of the last provinces in China to execute political prisoners. Rebiya was too important to kill, however: the police probably feared a riot. Sentenced instead to eight years in prison, she was released in 2005 after an international outcry and US diplomatic intervention and put on a plane to Washington.

Before she left, the secret police warned her that her family would suffer if she spoke out in exile. The day after she became head of the World Uighur Congress, in 1996, two of her sons were arrested in Urumchi. In Washington, she claimed to have been the target of an assassination attempt: a white Ford van three times deliberately rammed the car in which she was travelling.

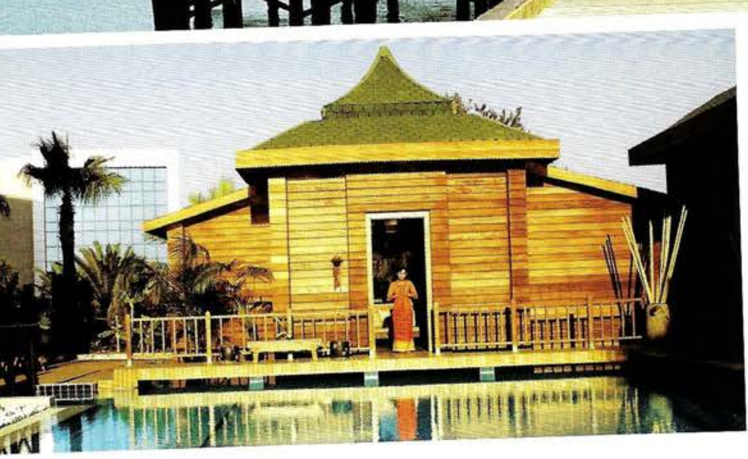
Many educated Chinese disagree with the heavy-handed tactics employed in Tibet and Xinjiang. It would be surprising if the authorities learned nothing from the murderous rampage of Uighurs in Urumchi and the subsequent world coverage. One signal of change would be the removal of Party Secretary Wang Lequan, a hardliner who wields the real power in Xinjiang and is said to harbour a personal animosity towards Rebiya and her family.

Even if that were to happen, however, the question is whether Rebiya Kadeer, although she can justly claim to have brought the world's attention to the Uighurs' cause, will be allowed to play any part in its resolution. ◆

Rebiya Kadeer's autobiography, written with Alexandra Cavelius, is published in English with an introduction by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as 'Dragon Fighter: One Woman's Epic Struggle for Peace with China' (Kales Press, 2009)



Christian Tyler is the author of 'Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang' (John Murray, 2003; Rutgers UP, 2004).
His article 'The Turks of China' and a 36-page photographic report by Ashley Gilbertson appeared in Cornucopia 31*.*
All available from www.cornucopia.net



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Polychrome, underglaze-painted, stoneware Iznik plate.
Photograph by Fritz von der Schulenburg

BOOKS

AN ANTI-WAR TOUR DE FORCE, ISLAND SAGAS, NEW NOVELS IN TRANSLATION, A VERY OTTOMAN TASTE FOR SHIRAZI MINIATURES, AND ISTANBUL'S WATERY WORLD. PLUS CAROLINE FINKEL'S HISTORY BOOK ROUND-UP

BALKAN NOIR

Talat S Halman

THE SIEGE

By Ismail Kadare
Canongate Books, £7.99

J FOLEY

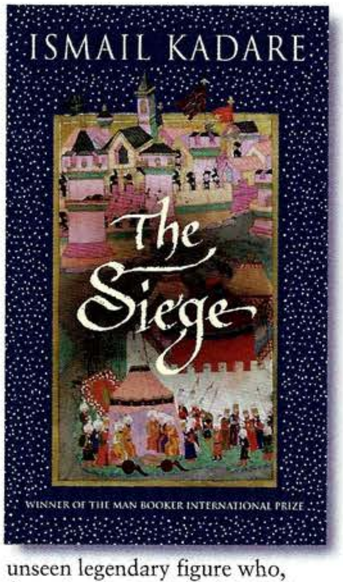
Like all empire-builders, the Ottomans possessed a ravenous ambition for territorial expansion, especially during their first three centuries. Their official chronicles resounded with military triumphs, while often glossing over defeats. By the same token, triumphant sieges were acclaimed to high heaven, whereas abortive blockades received scanty coverage. In modern Turkey, official historiography, as well as novels, have tended to perpetuate the tradition of paying homage to victories and down-playing humiliating defeats.

The prominent Albanian-French novelist Ismail Kadare's powerful work of fiction, *The Siege*, about the failed Ottoman blockade of an Albanian fortress, is likely to shock many Turks whose judgments are guided more by chauvinism than literary merit.

Kadare, occasionally mentioned as a Nobel Prize for Literature prospect, gives a virtuoso performance in depicting the desperation of the besieged, as well as the fury of the besieger. The action of the novel goes beyond the traumas experienced by both sides. It evolves as a masterful study of how collapse of morale engenders moral turpitude. *The Siege* is the grand metaphor for humanity, creating its own dismal failure in its hunger for booty and land.

The 2005 International Man Booker Prize was given to Kadare in recognition of his impressive capacity for unfurling human dramas. *The Siege* is unquestionably such a tour de force. Although it evokes historical events the likes of which took place, it stands as a riveting work of imagination. David Bellos, who must be given praise for the novel's masterful translation, informs the reader in his insightful afterword that: "Kadare's chronicle of ancient battle is not a historical novel, as he rightly claims. It is an anti-historical one."

However, traces of actual events, earlier or later Ottoman sieges, repulsed or successful, enliven the work. Anachronisms do not divest it of its historical authenticity. Hellbent on subduing the Balkans, the Ottomans waged many wars and found it hard to subjugate the Albanians, led by Skanderbeg (known as İskender Bey by the Turks), who stood firm against Turkish sieges. In the 1440s he had repelled the attacks of Murad II and, more significantly, the campaigns and the 1446 Croia siege launched by Mehmed II (hailed by the Turks as "The Conqueror"), the sultan who captured Constantinople in 1453, dealing a death blow to the Byzantine Empire. Kadare transforms Skanderbeg, applauded by the Pope as "champion of Christ", into an unseen legendary figure who, from the mountains, directs the defense and cuts off the Ottoman supply routes.



Interestingly, the Ottoman commander who laid the siege in Kadare's novel is given the name Tursun Pasha. The Ottoman historian of that time, named Tursun Beg, had participated in the Ottomans' two Albanian campaigns (1466 and 1467) and reported that the Sultan acted ruthlessly in order to force the Albanians into submission.

The Siege is peopled with vivid characters who also symbolise Ottoman governmental and military culture: Tursun Pasha, the frustrated and in many ways inept commander; Mevla Çelebi, a smooth but lackluster historian; a eunuch who provides young girls and supervises them; astrologers making wrong predictions; a wily quartermaster-general, more concerned about dwindling supplies than the lives of fighting men; Sadettin, the poet (dubbed the blind Homer), writing a versified account of the siege; Giaour, the "heathen" architect; Tahanka, a deaf-mute senior officer. They end up dead except for Mevla Çelebi. The Pasha commits suicide; some are buried alive when the tunnel they are digging to capture the citadel from below collapses; the Janissary officer Okcan dies after being bitten by one of the infectious rats with which the Ottomans try to spread disease in the fortress.

With its blood-curdling and heart-rending episodes, Kadare's novel functions like the script of a horror film that is relentless in its violence. Its action can be characterised as tragicomical in many ways, but it is surprisingly devoid of the art of "comic relief" which lent power and believability to Shakespearean tragedy. Ironically Kadare seems aware of the morbid appeal of ferocity. In *The Siege*, the Ottoman quartermaster advises the official chronicler that "the most fearful carnage of our times will take place... great massacres always give birth to great books... You really do have an opportunity to write a thundering chronicle redolent with pitch and blood." That observation might be in character for the quartermaster and Kadare; nonetheless *The Siege* would probably have benefited from an occasional bit of humour or slight light touch.

Structurally Kadare's book is ingenious – each chapter narrated from the menacing Ottoman side is preceded by a short lyrical prologue expressing the anxieties of the beleaguered Albanians.

The English translation by David Bellos, rendered from the French version by Jusuf Vrioni (published in Paris in 1994) is impressive – fully effective in its command of the vernacular, often vivid and dramatic – never mind the very few mixed metaphors (which are possibly not in the original Albanian), for example: "…men were coming together like bees to a swarm, then moving around, then dispersing, without rhyme or reason, like fluffy white clouds on a windy day."

Gloom pervades the novel. It probably reflects Kadare's own dark mood when he wrote it in the 1960s during Enver Hoxha's nightmarish regime in Albania. In a sense, his novel constitutes a metonym for his native country, living under its own ideological siege and isolated from the Communist world except for its single major ally, China. It is small wonder that, as soon as the Iron Curtain collapsed, Kadare took up residence in Paris, presumably to leave behind the horrid memories. His critics have taken him to task for his official status during Enver Hoxha's tyranny as delegate to the People's Assembly and for denouncing that regime only retroactively.

Within its historical context, *The Siege* stands as a compelling metaphor for the confrontation of Ottomans and Christendom, of Christianity and Islam, foreshadowing the future East-West conflict.

The Siege is a stirring narrative of defeat. Aside from the assault's collapse, it intimates many a welcome relief and scarcely any rejoicing (conceivably because, as Kadare is painfully aware, all of Albania would fall under Ottoman domination in the early 16th century and remain so for 500 years until 1912). The novel is not merely grim but totally noir in its pessimism. It does have a redeeming virtue: Kadare narrates his imaginary historical story outright, without using it as a platform to deliver anti-Ottoman or anti-Islam invectives. He does not fulminate, nor does he write as a jaundiced nationalist. In a universal sense, his work ranks as an anti-war novel par excellence.

Could he have created an epic with epiphany or a saga of sagacity? Had he been able to achieve this, *The Siege* might have emerged as a magnum opus. But it is certainly futile to hope for a masterpiece in a novel that seeks merely to expose war's folly rather than to pursue the ideal of peace. ◆

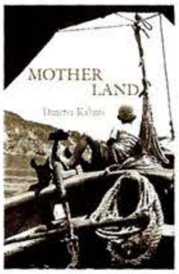
Talat Halman is dean of humanities and letters at Bilkent University. 'A Brave New Quest: 100 Modern Turkish Poems', edited and translated by Talat S Halman is (Syracuse University Press) is available from cornucopia.net at £12

HOME COMING

David Barchard

MOTHER LAND

By Dmetri Kakmi
Eland, £16.99



Every so often a book lands on a reviewer's desk from a writer he or she has never heard of before but which looks destined to become a classic. Dmetri Kakmi's *Mother Land* is one such. The author is a first-generation immigrant living in Australia, a country where – perhaps because it is so far away from Europe – local ethnic politics often seem so fiercely Turcophobic that they topple over into antipodean silliness. It would presumably have been easy for Kakmi, writing of his childhood experiences as a member of Turkey's tiny ethnic Greek minority, to play to this audience. Instead he has produced a book which benighted knee-jerk nationalists on both sides of the Aegean will detest but which will with any luck be remembered as remarkable literature long after time has swept such people away.

Anyone picking up this novel expecting an easy read should be warned it is painful, sometimes harrowing reading, and will trip up a reader coming to it with conventional expectations. On the other hand it will also surely be required reading for everyone wanting original anthropological insights into the daily life and tensions of minorities in the Levant a generation ago.

Dimitri, the author's *alter ego* narrator, grows up on the island of Bozcaada in the 1960s, the son of an ethnic Greek fisherman in a village divided between Greeks and Turks. The novel is a child's-eye portrait of the island's life during his final year there, told in a hauntingly direct present tense, as Dimitri recalls the march of the seasons and changes in the sea, sky, winds and vegetation that come with them. Even without the human antagonisms of the foreground story, this would be an unforgettable picture of a remote island and how it feels to live there. For some, Kakmi's writing about nature will be the book's foremost triumph. But it is far from being its only one.

As the Americans are landing on the moon, Bozcaada and its people are still entrapped in wretched ignorance and poverty; 21st-century Turkey's prosperity is not even yet a dream. The island's beauty contrasts with the harshness and intolerance of those who live on it. Equally bleak are the mutual hatred and violent feelings harboured by individuals on both sides. The Greek children are shocked by the racism of some of their Turkish school teachers, one of whom tells her Greek pupils she would like to poison them.

With few exceptions, almost everybody (including the young narrator) behaves on occasion with disgraceful viciousness, though the narrative emphasises unobtrusively that several of the few humane and generous spirits on the island – notably Ezet (presumably İzzet), a friend of Dimitri's father, Dimitri's best friend Refik, and Levent Efendi, their teacher – are Turks.

Eventually, in 1970, unable to take the poverty, local violence and minority status any longer, the family flies out to a new life in Australia and Dimitri forgets most of his Greek and his Turkish. The opening and closing sections describe a return visit, with a Turkish banker friend, to a much-changed and gentrified Bozcaada

in 2002, and Dimitri's coming to terms with his childhood and his memories of his mother.

This may all sound like a fairly typical emigrant's autobiographical first novel, but Kakmi has written something vastly beyond that. His narrative is vivid and gripping, his characters rounded and human in a way "village literature" seldom achieves. Though he pulls no punches about the sufferings of his family, he eschews the "victim" posturing familiar in emigrant stories, mentioning in passing, for example, that some of his Turkish neighbours were expelled from Lesvos (Midilli) by the Greek government in 1955. If some Turkish readers find his family's experiences hard to take, some Greek ones may accuse him of having a low "Hellenism count". Kakmi's vision of Turkishness and Greekness seems to be of a single, flawed continuum.

"Greece and Turkey sit on the cusp. They don't belong to the east or the west. Greece is the Narcissus gazing at his own reflection in the waters of the Aegean. What he sees staring back at him from the depths is Turkey. Narcissus is puzzled by what he sees. He's frightened… He wants to have what his reflection has and yet still retain the essence of his self. The truth is that he is neither one nor the other," the schoolmaster, Levent Efendi, tells his puzzled pupil.

There is an eventual twist to these remarks in the narrative, but it is a convincing one, as are the revelations that form the conclusion of the book. At its very end the narrative veers unexpectedly into magic realism as Dimitri has a final encounter in Istanbul with his long-dead mother. This departure from what has gone before is so well written that it does not jar, allowing the reader to hope that Dmetri Kakmi will not be a one-book novelist. But even if he is, *Mother Land* is an achievement that will survive.

GİRİT (CRETE)

By Ali Ekrem Erkal
In Turkish only
Izmir, ISBN 978-60, TL50

Ali Ekrem Erkal
GİRİT
TOPLUM

Ali Ekrem Erkal is a prominent member of the Izmir Cretan community and his daughter, Çiğdem, is renowned as the translator of *The Lord of the Rings* into Turkish. This handsome, privately published anthology, lavishly illustrated with pictures of Cretan Muslims in the late 19th and 20th centuries, tells a story which is the exact but earlier obverse of that of the Bozcaada Greek minority. Cretan Muslims were also on the Greek–Turkish continuum. (The photograph left is of a middle-class Muslim family.) Greek was usually their first language. But they, too, had their sufferings – around a quarter of the Muslims of eastern Crete were murdered by their neighbours in February 1897 and the Powers of Europe looked the other way. This book shows the *Giritliler* mostly in happy moments, in suits and fezzes, writing poetry and playing music, or posing for family portraits, and later evolving in Turkey into respectable, Westernised modernity. It is a treasure trove of social information that until now has not been available elsewhere. Like *Mother Land* it ends with a return to the island of the author's origins, with photographs of him and his wife in Hanya, Spinalonga, Ayios Nikolaos and elsewhere with their Christian Cretan friends and hosts. Smiles have overcome the tears. ◆

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ISTANBUL BALLADS

Caterina Scaramelli

Some books seem very attractive on the beach, but lose their charm once the season is over. Others want to be kept under a pillow, and demand intimacy and solitude. Yet others like to be held in an urban crowd, preferring public transport and park benches. Such are *Berji Kristen, Songs my Mother Never Taught Me* and *Fiasco*, with their loud and crowded casts. All by Turkish writers, they each narrate some unexpected corners of Istanbul, but the similarities end there. One is already a respectable age; two are freshly published. One is fantastic and dream-like, another puzzling and intricate, the third hilarious and perfectly timed.

BERJI KRISTEN: TALES FROM THE GARBAGE HILLS

By Latife Tekin
Translated by Ruth Christie and Saliha Paker
Marion Boyar, £8

Berji Kristin
LATIFE TEKIN

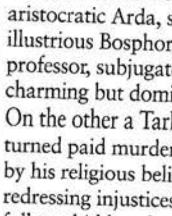
Istanbul seems to me to be expanding perennially, so that I often forget it has margins. These are larger than one would imagine: not a thin line of demarcation but a world of their own, where everything seems to end. And yet the periphery pulses in synchrony with the heart of the city, and from it everything seems to be born. Latife Tekin paints an imaginary Istanbul periphery with poetic prose. In this modern fable a community of squatters arrives on the periphery's hills, where every day the city's garbage is poured, shining in the sunset. They quickly assemble huts from disparate pieces of rubbish. At night the wind blows away their roofs, along with the cradles attached to them (and the astonished babies inside). During the day trucks come to disperse the settlement. The houses, patiently rebuilt over and over again, become bustling villages, one of them named Flower Hill. Here steamy blue waters flow from the surrounding factories, painting the squatters in painful colours; chemical flakes fall like snow in summer.

On Flower Hill all is mobile. Houses, relationships and stories are creatively assembled, then changed overnight. Living lives of gossip and dreams, miracles and protest, love and violence, the hut people narrate their stories as a choir, with solo voices emerging here and there.

Far from writing a morally burdened social commentary, Latife Tekin has created in *Tales from the Garbage Hills* a timeless exploration of the bustle of life and of story-making. This is a book to read on a slow, contemplative *vapur* trip.

SONGS MY MOTHER NEVER TAUGHT ME

By Selçuk Altun
Translated by Ruth Christie and Selçuk Berilgen
Telegram, £7.99



Songs my Mother Never Taught Me plays a game of mirrors with the social heterogeneity of contemporary Istanbul, from the Bosphorus to Tarlabaşı, passing through Üsküdar. On one side there is the aristocratic Arda, son of an illustrious Bosphorus University professor, subjugated by his charming but domineering mother. On the other a Tarlabaşı orphan turned paid murderer, convinced by his religious beliefs that he is redressing injustices. As Arda follows hidden clues left by his father's killer, new secondary characters appear in every chapter, bringing with them amusing anecdotes. Like a spicy *biber dolması* (stuffed pepper), the story is saturated with poetry, biblical references, historical details and musical fragments. Yet at times the peppers seem soggy and overcooked. The narrative flow is not consistently successful in holding together the novel's ingredients, and occasionally I found myself awaiting the development of events that were never mentioned again.

However, this unpolished story is well researched and intriguing. It is as if Isabel Allende were narrating Orhan Pamuk, with a slightly crude sense of humour. Unfortunately the translation is clumsy: if possible, get hold of a Turkish copy. And read in small doses, sipping strong tea while waiting for a train.

FIASCO

By Coşkun Büktel
Translated by Feyza Howell
Nettleberry, £6.99

Imagine a Tarantino script, set on the streets of Istanbul, its protagonists driving down from Gümüşsuyu to Ortaköy, checking out old books in the sidestreets of İstiklâl Caddesi and planning an explosion in Taksim. Theatre playwright and critic Coşkun Bütel's Fiasco stages a fresh and amusing Istanbul crime story with a vivid cinematographic quality and a perfect English translation.

The book begins with a translation, but a bad one, as Mesut the interpreter's mistakes provoke a scandalous fight during the visit of a foreign prime minister. From that day on the unemployed interpreter tries unsuccessfully to commit suicide. Simultaneously we follow the rich Özdemir and his young lover – persecuted by his obsessively jealous wife with an invasive Japanese camera-phone – and Ayten, a young poet looking for the poster of an obscure old film in the secondhand bookstores of Cihangir. Add the rhythm of a Shakespearian comedy: three clumsy gangsters dial a wrong phone number, triggering a concatenated series of events that weaves together our clumsy heroes and antiheroes. *Fiasco*'s long and humorous dialogues match its absurd plot, and the book's tempo is well suited to the beat of Istanbul. A perfect read for long journeys on crowded urban buses, if you can contain your laughter. ◆

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OF PAUPERS AND PRINCES

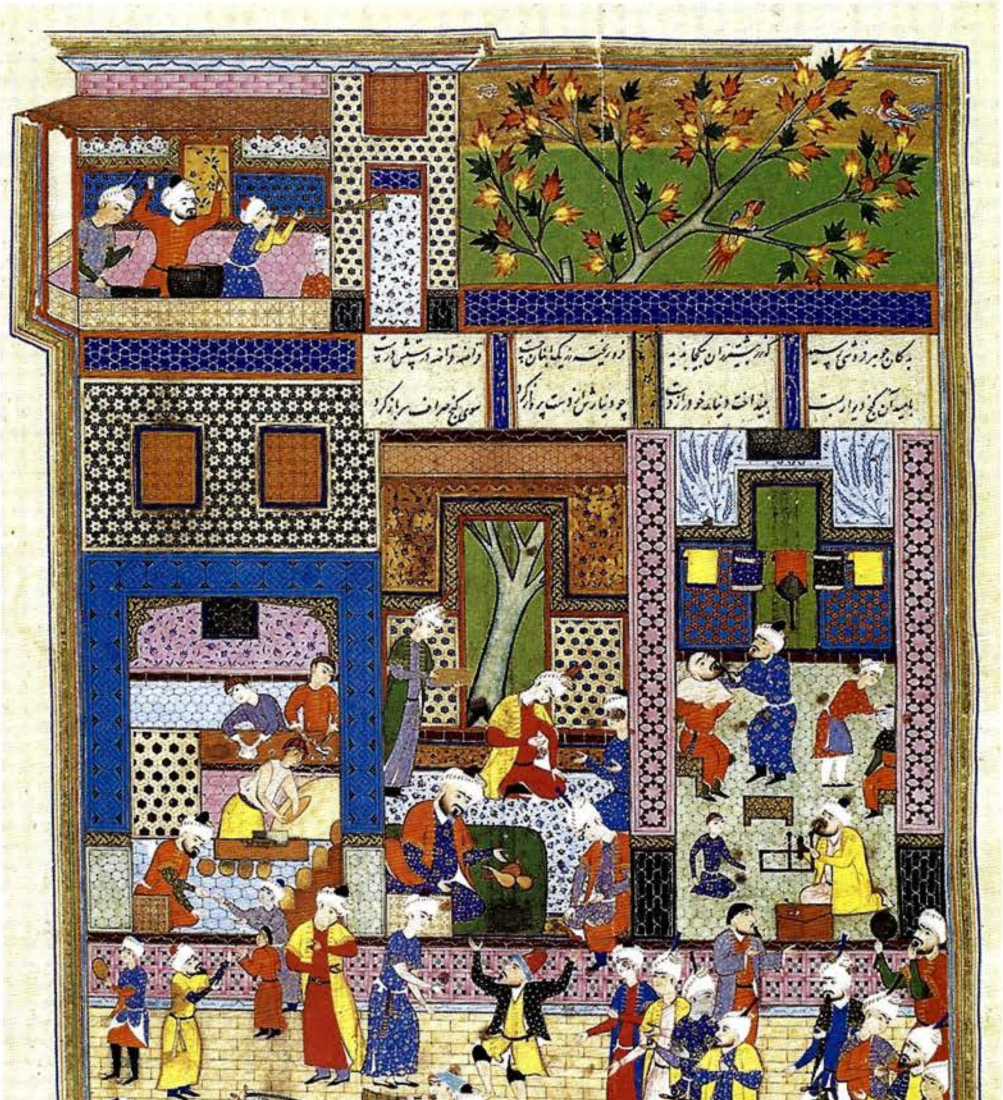
Tim Stanley

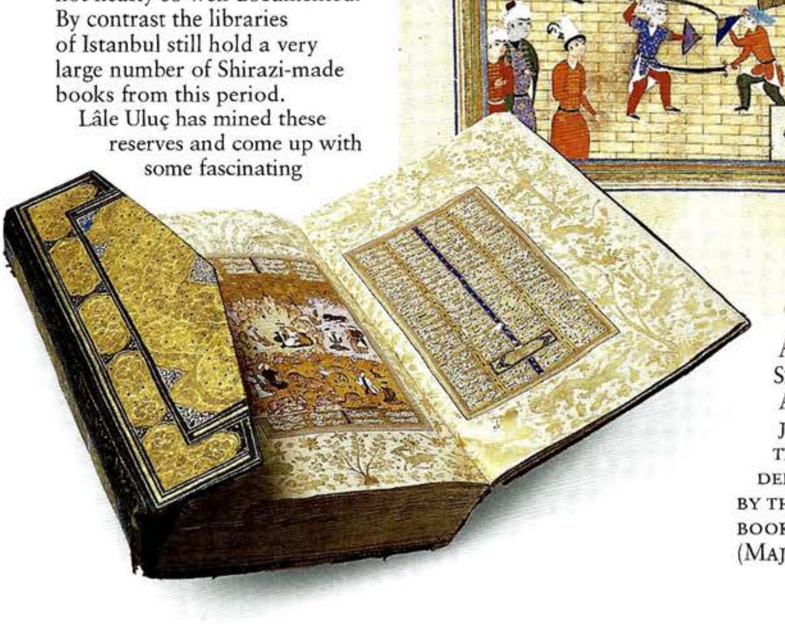
TURKMAN GOVERNORS, SHIRAZ ARTISANS AND OTTOMAN COLLECTORS: Sixteenth-Century Shiraz Manuscripts

By Lâle Uluç
İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, TL190

This very substantial tome is filled with high-quality images drawn from manuscripts copied in Shiraz in the 16th century. Yet most of the photographs were taken in Istanbul, where the book was published. These two facts tell it all: in the 16th century the Ottomans were probably the biggest market for manuscripts produced in Shiraz. The "probably" is due to the fact that the consumption by other markets, such as Uzbek-ruled Central Asia and the Muslim states of South Asia, is not nearly so well documented. By contrast the libraries of Istanbul still hold a very large number of Shirazi-made books from this period.

Lâle Uluç has mined these reserves and come up with some fascinating





ABOVE: A PAINTING FROM A SHIRAZI MANUSCRIPT, 1580–85. A MAGHREBI VISITS THE JEWELLERS' MARKET. MANY OF THE TOPKAPI'S SHIRAZI WORKS DEPICT LIVELY SCENES INSPIRED BY THE MILDLY SCANDALOUS BOOK 'MEETINGS WITH LOVERS' (MAJALIS AL-USHSHAQ).

LEFT: A 1574 COPY OF THE 'SHAHNAME OF FIRDAUSI' IN A GILDED BINDING.
RIGHT: THE LACQUER BINDINGS ARE ANOTHER REVELATION. HERE THE 'KHAMSA OF KHUSRAU' (1571) DEPICTS THE QUITE UNRELATED TALE OF RÜSTEM AND THE KAGHAN OF CHINA

results – not to mention a boldly cast framework for understanding the development of Shirazi book-painting over the course of a century and more. But even if her words were to fade completely, the book would still have its magnificent pictures. A full-page view is often accompanied by an enlarged detail to make a point, and many captions include a pithy comment explaining the picture's inclusion.

For an art historian, these are an outstandingly useful contribution in themselves. Nothing like them has ever been published before. For the general reader, they will provide hours of wonder and mostly innocent fun.

There are plenty of princely exploits, battles scenes and enthronements. There are depictions of the love-lorn heroes of Persian romances, of the Prophet's night journey through the heavens and of pilgrimages to the Ka'bah. There are also the less-elevated themes of baths, brothels and market life. A gypsy boy thumps a learned man on the head with his harp. Another foolish wise man leaves his shoes with a butcher's boy as a token of his love.

Dr Uluç explains how these new genre scenes came to be included in the Shiraz repertory of subject matter through the illustration of a relatively new work in Chagatay Turkish, the *Majalis al-Ushshaq*, or *Meetings with Lovers*. This mildly scandalous book was, as the title of one of her earlier articles describes it, "written in Herat, copied in Shiraz and read in Istanbul".

The author also addresses the issue of how the Ottomans came to import so many Shirazi manuscripts, and the effect this had on their own, rather smaller, production of illustrated books.

The illustrations are only part of the story, as Lâle Uluç also examines the many unillustrated manuscripts from 16th-century Shiraz now lodged in Istanbul libraries. She gives special attention to Korans, which, as the century progressed, were produced with increasingly elaborate illumination. Some, indeed, are the most lavishly decorated Koran manuscripts ever produced in Iran, with rich patterns filling the margins on every page. Her coverage of the illumination in these and other manuscripts is exemplary, as she gives enough illustrations to enable us understand a subject we have no adequate language to discuss in the same terms as figurative painting.

Indeed, Lâle Uluç sees her Shirazi manuscripts as *Gesamtkunstwerke*, total works of art, examining every aspect of their production. This may seem a logical approach, but it has been taken only too rarely. It gives her work a unique value, as she has been able to bring whole classes of material to our notice for the first time.

The history of Shirazi lacquer bindings, for example, was completely unrecorded before Dr Uluç started her research. The illustrations show how sophisticated and attractive they are.

As someone who has specialised in the history of Iranian lacquer, I should feel embarrassed at how little I knew of these bindings. I certainly feel immensely grateful for her publication of so many, and her research on them. Previous work on 16th-century manuscripts from Iran has concentrated on court production, to the exclusion of the much greater volume of manuscripts produced in provincial centres of production. Shiraz was the greatest of these, and Lâle Uluç's book will make sure that Shiraz is never ignored in the same way again. ◆

Tim Stanley is senior curator of the Islamic Middle East collection at the V&A, and the principal author of 'Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East' (V&A Publications)

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WATER OVER THE BRIDGE

Robert Ousterhout

The Water Supply of Byzantine Constantinople

By James Crow, Jonathan Bardill and Richard Bayliss
The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, London £50

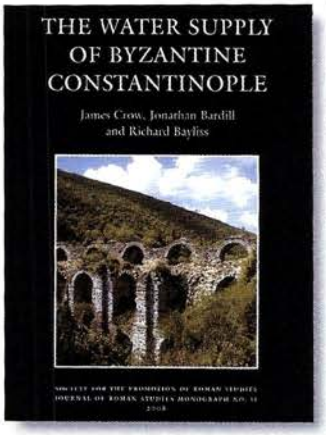
For the English-speaking community of Istanbul the suggestion of aqueduct-hunting in Thrace strikes fear into the hearts of all but the foolhardy. For years, tours by the Friends of the American Research Institute seemed cursed to lose their way (as a group or individually), get stuck in the mud (usually by the busload), fall into the river (usually individually), or at the very least get rained on (without exception). Relentlessly cheerful, Prof James Crow of Edinburgh University (mastermind of both the tour and this book) would laugh off each misadventure and forge onward.

Within a few dozen kilometres of Istanbul, Thrace transforms into an inhospitable jungle – sparsely inhabited, densely vegetated, seemingly unworthy of the historical epithet "hinterland of Constantinople". To the untrained eye, there is virtually nothing of interest there. To the valiant British aqueduct-hunter, however, Thrace is a gold mine, as this book lucidly demonstrates.

Hidden beneath lush foliage and tucked away in deep, uninhabited valleys lie the remains of the world's longest ancient aqueduct system, which supplied the early Byzantine city of Constantinople with copious quantities of water. By Crow's calculations, it measured 592km in overall length, surpassing the total length of Rome's 11 aqueducts by some 72km. Constituting one of the greatest engineering feats of the ancient world, it was essential to the existence of the Byzantine capital, which was strategic geographically but lacked a good source of water within its walls. Thus writing the history of the aqueduct system means in effect rewriting the history of the city.

For the uninitiated, the term aqueduct conjures images of postcard-worthy, multi-tiered, arcaded bridges, like the Pont du Garde in southern France. Indeed, the almost 1km span of the Aqueduct of Valens (the Bozdoğan Kemeri) in central Istanbul comes closest to fitting the bill. But Roman aqueducts were utilitarian rather than aesthetic achievements, designed to provide water to a thirsty city and not necessarily to elicit oohs and aahs from passing tourists. In fact, most aqueducts avoided bridges whenever possible. The point was to create a near-level channel through which the water could flow gently from the springs in the hills to the cisterns, fountains, baths and nymphaia of the city. As Crow explains: "The normal option was to construct the water channel against the side of the hill so that the line proceeded, often with great sinuosity, around the hills in order to maintain a gentle gradient toward the city." With this "cut-and-cover" method of construction, most of the aqueduct consisted of buried channels; only when the vagaries of the topography dictated was a deep tunnel or arched bridge included. Like their Roman predecessors, the early Byzantines were pragmatic, and, while a grandiose bridge might testify to dominion and territorial control, it was more important to provide the capital with water.

Fortunately there are a small number of picturesque bridges. A few summers ago I joined the intrepid team for a day of aqueduct-hunting, armed with camera and umbrella. They came armed with topographical maps of eastern Thrace and hand-held GPS units, for they had become familiar enough with the water system to be able to predict when an aqueduct bridge should appear. As they had determined, once the position and relative elevation of a spring had been identified, it remained to chart the path of least resistance – that is, to follow the lines of the topography in a gentle descent into Istanbul. Evidence from exposed channels and tunnels provided additional clues. The jungle-like plant growth argued against free-range exploration, but local farmers, charcoal-burners and curious boys provided tips on the locations of surviving components, which often were romantically misnamed. On the day in question, both the system of prediction and a local farmer had indicated that a hike up the Kale Dere stream would bring us to the remains of a bridge (in local lore, however, it was a castle). After a mercifully short bout of machete-hacking at the foliage, the bridge appeared – to no one's great surprise except possibly my own – exactly where it was supposed to be. Spanning the deep gorge, the bridge connected to buried channels on either side.



Working with the relative elevations allowed the team to rewrite the history of the city's water system, both outside and inside the city walls. For years the common opinion had been that the Bozdoğan Kemeri represented the sole provider of water for the city, and that it was Emperor Valens's fourth-century rebuilding of a system introduced by Hadrian in the second century. But the historical references were often contradictory, and the numerous surviving cisterns within the city are on several different levels.

The authors determined that there were in fact two lines of aqueducts. The earlier, Hadrianic line preserves no spectacular bridges but followed the topography from near Cebeciköy into the city along the Golden Horn at an elevation of 30–34m above sea level. Water channels have been found at that level within the walls, and this line would have supplied the forum of the old city of Byzantion, as well as the Basilica Cistern, the Baths of Zeuxippos and the Great Palace. As the population grew and the city expanded, more water was needed, and the Valens system was added in the mid-fourth century, extending deep into the hills of Thrace. It entered the city at a level over 20m higher than the older system, and provided water to the higher elevations of Constantine's new city. The Valens system was subsequently expanded westward as far as Vize, and the great open-air cisterns were added inside the walls of Theodosius, primarily to supply water for agriculture.

The resulting book provides a valuable synthesis of archaeological and historical data that no well-equipped research library should be without. In addition to tracking the water channels, bridges, tunnels and cisterns, the book also catalogues all historical texts (in translation) related to Constantinople's water system, inscriptions, masons' marks and Christian symbols, as well as documenting the repairs and maintenance of the system through the centuries.

While the general reader may be swept away in the wash of too much information, the specialist will bathe happily in the careful documentation that follows a decade-long process of discovery and analysis. Ironically, exploration began as a study not of the water system but of the city's defenses, tracking the line of the Long Wall, the outermost line of fortification that lies some 60km west of the city. Supplementing the Land Walls of Theodosius II, the Long Wall was built circa 500 by Anastasius and extended from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara.

As Crow and Co quickly realised, the two systems were inextricably linked: the protection of water sources was critical to the city's survival. Now that the definitive book on the water system has appeared, we eagerly await the final publication on the Long Walls. ◆

Robert Ousterhout is professor of Byzantine art and architecture at the University of Pennsylvania

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Dance of Fire

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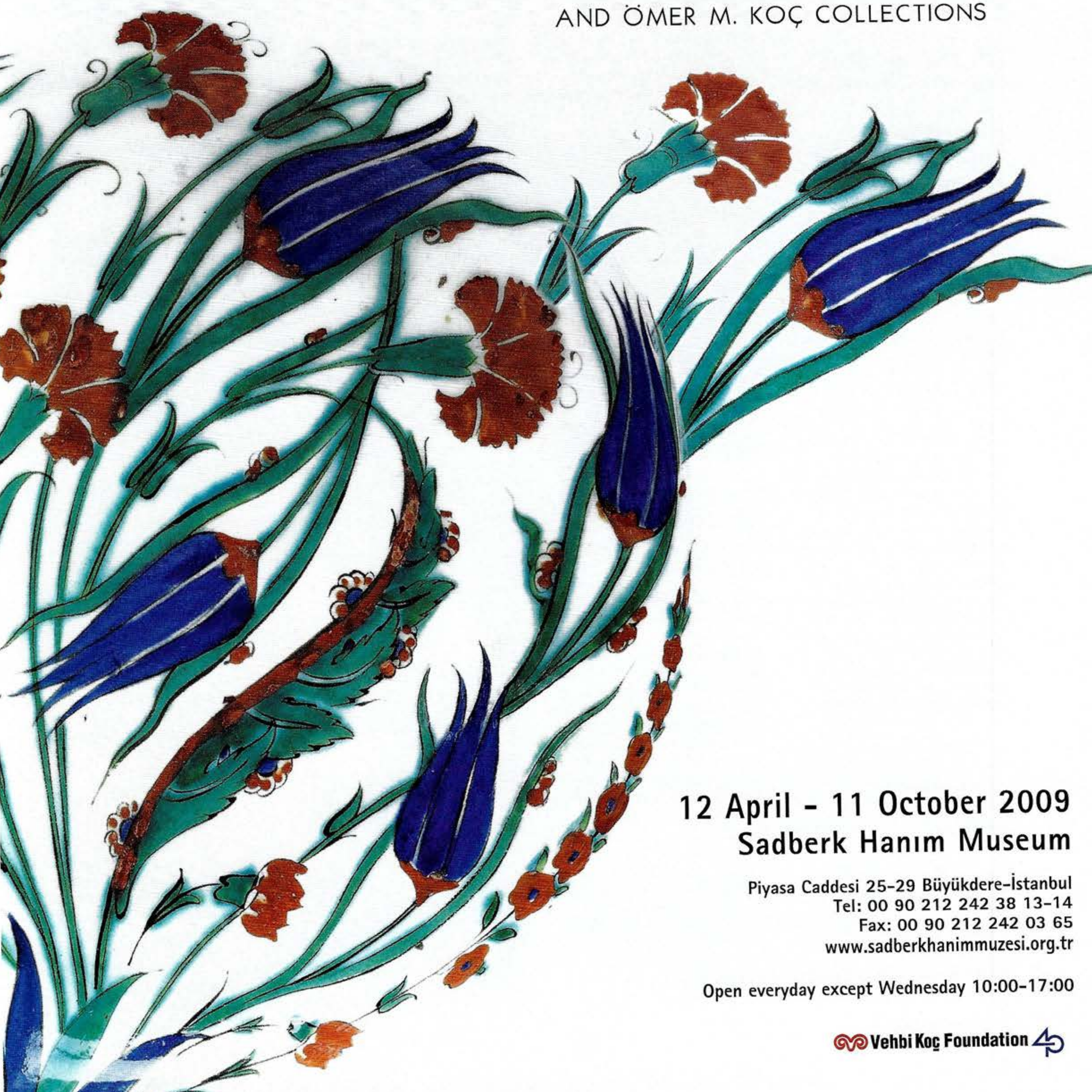

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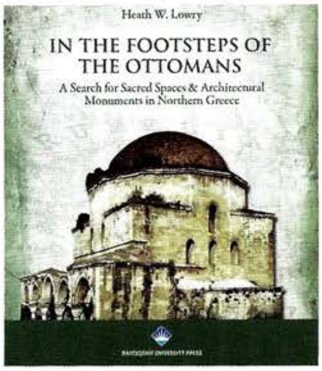
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Caroline Finkel

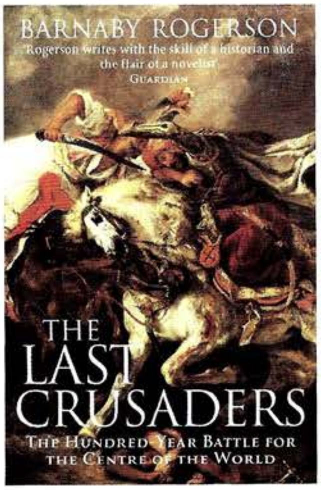
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE OTTOMANS: A Search for Sacred Spaces and Architectural Monuments in Northern Greece

By Heath W Lowry
Bahçeşehir University Press, Istanbul £27.50

Heath Lowry's prolificity cannot be contained. We reviewed the companion volume to his latest work (*The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550*) in Cornucopia 41, and here he continues his single-minded search for traces of the Ottoman past, with a focus on Muslim religious sanctuaries and venerated trees. The latter are not to be underestimated. Ancient trees have often survived the ravages of time and destructive impulses better than monuments of stone and mortar – in Serres, for instance, the 18 plane trees that magically sprouted from the stakes to which the 18 warriors accompanying Gazi Evrenos Bey, the Ottoman conqueror of Northern Greece, tethered their horses have proliferated, and attract modern pilgrims who associate them with St John.


Heath W. Lowry
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE OTTOMANS
A Search for Sacred Spaces & Architectural Monuments in Northern Greece
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY PRESS

Lowry chronicles Muslim sacred spaces today visited by Christians, mosques that became churches after the Ottoman retreat from the Balkans, as well as Muslim sanctuaries destroyed after the population exchange of 1923. A significant number of Ottoman monuments in northern Greece are now being restored and Lowry's exhilarating new series of studies, accompanied by a wealth of photographs old and new, is now the indispensable *vade mecum* for the Ottoman explorer.


BARNABY ROGERSON
'Rogerson writes with the skill of a historian and the flair of a novelist'
GUARDIAN
THE LAST CRUSADERS
THE HUNDRED-YEAR BATTLE FOR THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

THE LAST CRUSADERS: The Hundred-Year Battle for the Centre of the World

By Barnaby Rogerson
Little Brown, London £20

As Barnaby Rogerson writes in his gripping new book, crusading went out of fashion following the Latin seizure of Constantinople in 1204. Soon thereafter the tables were turned, and Muslim powers began to inflict defeats on the flower of Christendom – until, that is, the Portuguese ventured across the Straits of Gibraltar to sack Ceuta in 1415, sparking a "world war" that would end, again in Morocco, in 1578, with the defeat of the Portuguese King Sebastian by Sultan Abdulmalik. In the intervening years the Habsburgs (of both the Spanish and Austrian houses) fought the Ottomans and a host of lesser Muslim states, even as the Portuguese sailed the oceans to establish the first global trading empire. Rogerson tells a rollicking tale, bringing to life the superheroes of the past while conjuring up the mainly Mediterranean shores where they vied for power and profit in a long coda to the crusades of medieval times. His text is enhanced by a plethora of maps, timelines, biographies and family trees to guide the reader through the complex history and geography of an era that has left an indelible mark on the modern world.

THE CITY'S PLEASURES: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century

By Shirine Hamadeh
University of Washington Press, Seattle and London £39

If there is one bit of Ottoman history accepted as gospel, it is that the Tulip Age was a period in the early 18th century when the first glimmerings of Western influence appeared in Istanbul – and were as abruptly extinguished in a revolt that brought the deposition of a sultan. Shirine Hamadeh's absorbing and richly illustrated book overturns this comfortable certainty. For one thing, to confine the spirit of the times to the few short years when the court went tulip-crazy is a mistake. New forms of sociability – a certain freedom to enjoy one's leisure in the public spaces of the capital, whether this involved fancying tulips or not – developed across all classes and throughout the 18th century. Moreover, that icon of the Tulip Age, the palace of Ahmed III at Saadabad, is shown by Hamadeh to have been more a product of cultural interaction with Iran rather than with France, as the received wisdom insists. Her argument is supported by attention to written and visual evidence and, tellingly, to poetry such as adorns the fountains that still beautify the city. The notion of the Tulip Age was, it turns out, dreamt up little over a century ago, and popularised by a historian whose aim was to present the collapsing Ottoman Empire as Western rather than Eastern in inclination.

The City's Pleasures
Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century

EVLIYA ÇELEBI: Pepys and Polo rolled into one

Plans are ahoof for the celebration in 2011 of the 400th anniversary of the birth of Evliya Çelebi – an Ottoman Marco Polo and Samuel Pepys rolled into one. A selection of extracts from his compendious *Book of Travel*, chosen by the doyen of Evliya studies, Robert Dankoff and published by Eland Books in 2010, will offer the first opportunity for a general readership to savour his witty, first-hand portrait of the Ottoman realm in English.

He will be remembered on the path as well as on the page: on September 22, 2009, I will be setting off with a group of riders to trace one of Evliya's routes on horseback for the first time. Taking his *Book of Travels* as a road map, we will follow the early stages of his journey to complete the pilgrimage in 1671, retracing his tracks from the south Marmara village of Hersek to the town of Simav – a distance of some 1000km. As they travel through magnificent landscapes and village byways they will discover the disappearing equestrian culture of western Anatolia. The Evliya Çelebi Ride will become the basis for a cultural route, the Evliya Çelebi Way, to which a guide book will appear in 2011. Extracts from the diary of the ride will be published in Corncuopia. ◆

Caroline Finkel is the author of Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923 (John Murray, £12). All titles available from cornucopia.net

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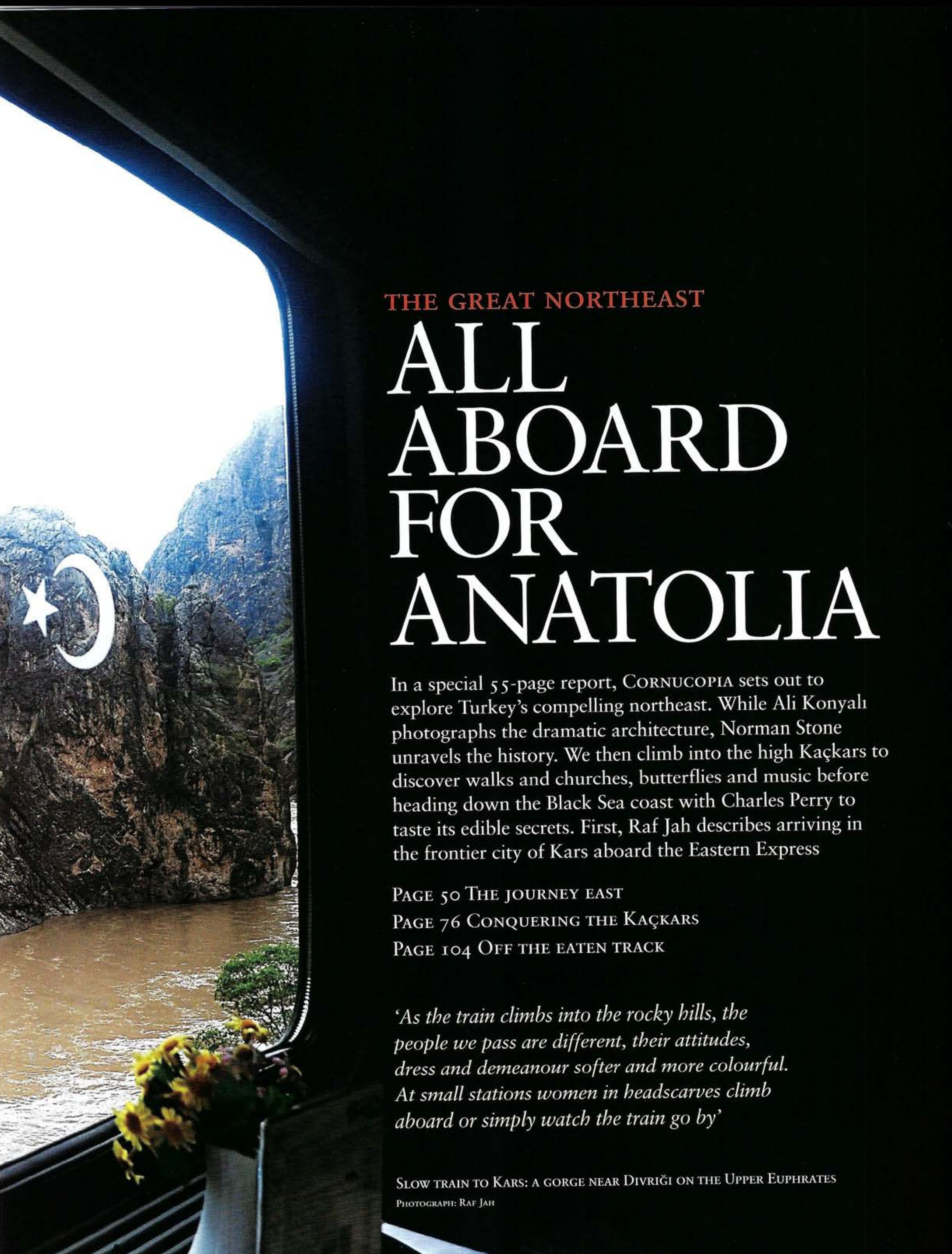


THE GREAT NORTHEAST

ALL ABOARD FOR ANATOLIA

In a special 55-page report, CORNUCOPIA sets out to explore Turkey's compelling northeast. While Ali Konyalı photographs the dramatic architecture, Norman Stone unravels the history. We then climb into the high Kaçkars to discover walks and churches, butterflies and music before heading down the Black Sea coast with Charles Perry to taste its edible secrets. First, Raf Jah describes arriving in the frontier city of Kars aboard the Eastern Express

PAGE 50 THE JOURNEY EAST
PAGE 76 CONQUERING THE KAÇKARS
PAGE 104 OFF THE EATEN TRACK

'As the train climbs into the rocky hills, the people we pass are different, their attitudes, dress and demeanour softer and more colourful. At small stations women in headscarves climb aboard or simply watch the train go by'

SLOW TRAIN TO KARS: A GORGE NEAR DIVRIĞI ON THE UPPER EUPHRATES
PHOTOGRAPH: RAF JAH

The Journey East

By overnight express to Kars

'As the scenery changes to the flat of the Anatolian plateau, we watch the sun go down over a dinner of salad, *köfte*, chicken kebabs and *cacık* of cucumber and yoghurt'

We arrive at Karaköy in time for the 7am Istanbul Maritime Lines ferry to Asia: my wife, Francisca, my friend Mike Eggars and myself. The vessel's diesel turbines shake the decking and the brass propellers churn the water as we surge away from Europe. Avoiding the occasional tanker, bulk carrier and numerous fishing skiffs, we plough between two continents. The weak morning sun shines on Dolmabahçe Palace and the high-rises of Taksim and Şişli. All too soon we are docking at Haydarpaşa railway station, a German schloss parked beside the Bosphorus.

My experience of restaurant cars on Turkish trains has been mixed: sometimes there will be one, sometimes not. Just in case, we have a reasonable breakfast at the station, whose restaurant is one of my favourites. With its blue-tiled walls and simple painted ceilings, it is a secret gem enjoyed only by commuters – the first bread of the day for the incoming businessman, the last glass of rakı before the train home.

The Doğu Ekspresi (Eastern Express) is, I believe, Turkey's longest domestic train journey. Leaving Haydarpaşa, it trundles down to Eskişehir, up to Ankara, down to Kayseri and up to Sivas, then east to Erzincan and Erzurum before it finally halts at Kars, 30 miles from the old Soviet border. In earlier times the express would continue to Yerevan in Armenia for a direct connection to Moscow, but it was never a deluxe, Orient Express affair. When I first took the Eastern, in 1991, it was a grimy train with a few carriages of old but comfortable Pullman seats, filthy couchettes and, if you were lucky, a snack bar. Much has changed. Before us is a fully air-conditioned, seven-carriage express. The Pullman seats are cloth-covered, the couchettes spotless and an excellent restaurant car serves hot meals all the way to Kars. At the back is possibly the most luxurious sleeper car outside Moscow. We climb aboard, stow our stuff and wander off to the restaurant car with its large windows.

At exactly 8.30 the Doğu clangs and bangs and, with a screech, pulls out of Haydarpaşa. The electric engine pulls the short train easily along the coast for two hours. We sit at our table drinking *çay* and watching the small ports bordering the Sea of Marmara and the industrial arm of Istanbul slide past.

After Izmit, the train climbs into the rocky hills as we enter Anatolia proper. The people we pass are different, their attitudes, dress and demeanour softer and more colourful. When the train halts at small stations women in headscarves climb aboard or simply watch the train go by.

After five hours we slide to a halt at the

Making tracks across the plain of Kars: the road to Çildir and the Georgian border. The road weaves across the plain for hours

Tatar-speaking city of Eskişehir. I take to my sprung mattress and snooze until someone bangs on my door. "Sir, our carriage has blown a fuse," says our conductor. "The fuse cannot be repaired by the engineers here and so we have to change carriage."

"Where are we?" I ask.

"Ankara," he replies and moves on down the carriage, banging on doors.

The operation involves all the sleeper car's passengers getting out of bed, dressing and moving to the platform. We sit around for half an hour as our carriage is uncoupled and a replacement found. While the express disappears, minus our carriage, for a track manoeuvre, a small shunting engine arrives on the next-door platform with a fully made-up sleeper, which it drops in front of us. The express returns and with a bang and a hiss the train is whole again.

After Ankara the scenery changes to the flat of the Anatolian plateau. We watch the sun go down over a dinner of salad, *köfte*, chicken kebabs and *cacık* of cucumber and yoghurt. The bed is a little narrow. I bounce very gently as we make our way into the night, but I sleep early and well.

"This train is as comfortable as anything in Europe," says Mike the next morning. "More comfortable, I would say. It's just slower."

It is 8am and we have reassembled in the restaurant car. Central Anatolia gives way to eastern Anatolia. The rolling hills grow more jagged and the track starts to follow the course of the Euphrates. The hills become steep cliffs, then pan out into the wide valley that leads to the city of Erzincan. The station has a beautiful view of the snow-covered mountains around the city, but we halt just long enough to refuel, then carry on east. We arrive at and depart from Erzurum in twilight, then climb to 2200 metres, one of the highest points of the journey. When the lights fail in the restaurant car we eat in darkness and then sleep.

I awake with a jolt as the train bounces to a halt. It is midnight and we have arrived in Kars. I silently curse the sleeping-car attendant for not waking us. By the time we have our bags together, the train starts to manoeuvre into a siding and we are stuck on board for a further 25 minutes on top of our 40 hours. When we finally manage to get off, I ask a polite tramp in the heated waiting-room where I can find a taxi and am advised to ask the stationmaster. He and his security guard, surprisingly wide awake at 1am, direct us to walk into town, find the police at such and such a crossroads and ask them. This sounds ridiculous, but we shoulder our backpacks and set off. After 300 metres we come to a crossroads with a busy grocery store, outside which is parked a police minibus.

I ask for directions and a policeman immediately offers to call us a taxi. It arrives five minutes later and a few minutes after that, we are in the pleasant, though slightly overpriced, Simer Hotel.

Photograph: Raf Jah

BY TAXI OVER THE PLAIN OF KARS

'We see camps of yurts that can withstand summer rainstorms and still provide comfort – a scene reminiscent of Mongolia, but with Massey Ferguson tractors'

We take a taxi to the ruined city of Ani and a small castle near Georgia. The people we pass do not seem badly off. The rich earth is being tilled by new-looking tractors. Sheep and goats wander in large flocks, watched over by flat-capped shepherds and Kangal dogs. The stone village houses all have satellite dishes.

These people walk with their sheep for days at a time. We see camps of yurts that can withstand summer rainstorms and still provide comfort – a scene reminiscent of Mongolia, but with Massey Ferguson tractors. Central Asia definitely starts somewhere near Sivas, yet access is possible in a Renault taxi.

Ani, with its ruined churches, is interesting, but more intriguing is that the second half of the city was destroyed by Stalin, anxious to remove any vestige of Armenian culture. If anyone has any illusions about Russia's influence on the Caucasus, they have only to look across to the Armenian frontier. The guard-towers are manned and the border posts, while filthy and disorganised, are active. At the main base two flags fly – one Russian, one Armenian – but every other post has only a Russian flag. The Turks are still facing the same Russian army they have faced for centuries.

But change is in the air. Since Russia showed its primacy in the Caucasus by invading Georgia in 2008, a worried Armenia has leant towards Washington for support. President Obama has chosen this moment to visit Turkey to try to repair a relationship damaged by the rhetoric of his predecessor. The Turks, caught in the superpowers' Caucasian clash, have had to look at who their real allies are here. I suspect most have come to the realisation that they have no friends in the region, but that they can do business with the Armenians, tired of being blockaded by a moribund Georgia, a pro-Moscow Azerbaijan and a sanctioned Iran. As I look at the Russian soldier facing Turkey from the old Soviet tower, I think that he might one day go home and this border reopen.

In the 15 years since my first visit, the weather has had a negative effect on the ruins of Ani. Where possible, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has

SCHOOLCHILDREN FROM KARS TRAIPSE PAST THE CATHEDRAL AT ANI. BEYOND, THE RUSSIANS STILL GUARD THE OLD IRON CURTAIN added discreet metal supports, but there is no denying the force of the elements.

Strangely, the Armenians have chosen to open a quarry on their side, and cranes and trucks have scarred the once-green hills and cliffs. We go inside one of the small churches and photograph the faded but impressive images of the twelve Apostles. All in all, Ani is still spectacular.

Şemsettin, our taxi driver, asks what we want to do next. He offers to take us to Çıldır and the Devil's Castle. We agree on a price of TL200 and he drives us back towards Kars, then north towards Ardahan.

When I came down this road in 1994 the bus ground along the muddy slope that passed for a road. The sky, the houses and life in general here were grey. My diary of the time records a conversation with the bus conductor.

"This is a 24-hour road," he informed us. "The army keep it open all day and all night because it serves the border guard stations."

"And the tarmac road?"

"That closes after 8pm as it becomes too dangerous – you know, terrorism."

Today we zoom along well-maintained tarmac. Gone are the soldiers, sandbags and guns at the crossroads north of Kars. Now there is a small fish restaurant. But some things have not changed. Our taxi cruises around Lake Çıldır and past three small villages. Each has its own gendarmerie, some a large infantry barracks, with the Armenian frontier on one side of the village, the Georgian frontier on the other. The numbers of howitzers and troop-carriers are up. I have the distinct impression this army is not here to ask questions of its own people, but to protect them. The Georgian border is equally well defended. One can only suspect Russia's Caucasian ventures have made the Turks double their guard.

The road comes to Çıldır, a town of Kafkas, half-Muslim half-nothing. We drive on to a small village. The path, cut into the side of cliffs, is broad and we walk along, looking down on the tiny river below, until we pop around the corner and see the Devil's Castle, a small fortification perched on a ridge jutting out into the steep valley of the stream. With views for miles in both directions, it guards the valley absolutely.

Driving back, we stop at a lakeside government rest-house.

"Is there any terror here?" I ask Şemsettin.

"No, no, it's all gone," he says proudly. There used to be some in Digor, where the Armenian frontier comes right down to the village and the terrorists came across easily. But that's over now."

"How did they end it? Did the Armenians close their border?"

"No, no, they never changed anything. Our army just came and sat on the village and closed the hole. But understand, we get on fine with the Armenians. Our animals wander over the border and they give us our sheep back, and we give them theirs when the reverse happens." ◆

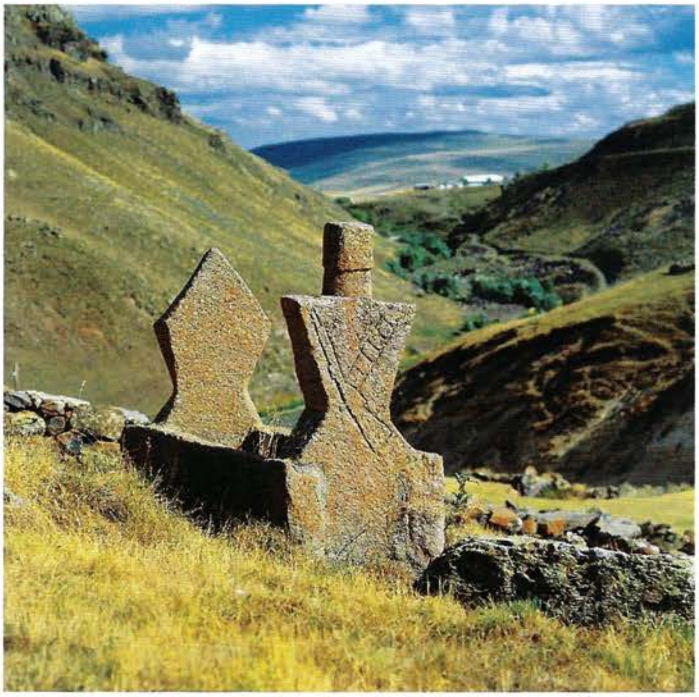
www.cornucopia.net/rafjah.html

Photograph: Raf Jah

It's the place where Orhan Pamuk set his grim novel 'Snow'. And it was long dismissed as a Cold War frontier town. But have we been missing something? A new book reveals that, beyond the bleakness, the city of Kars – and the whole northeastern corner of Turkey – is an architectural historian's treasure trove

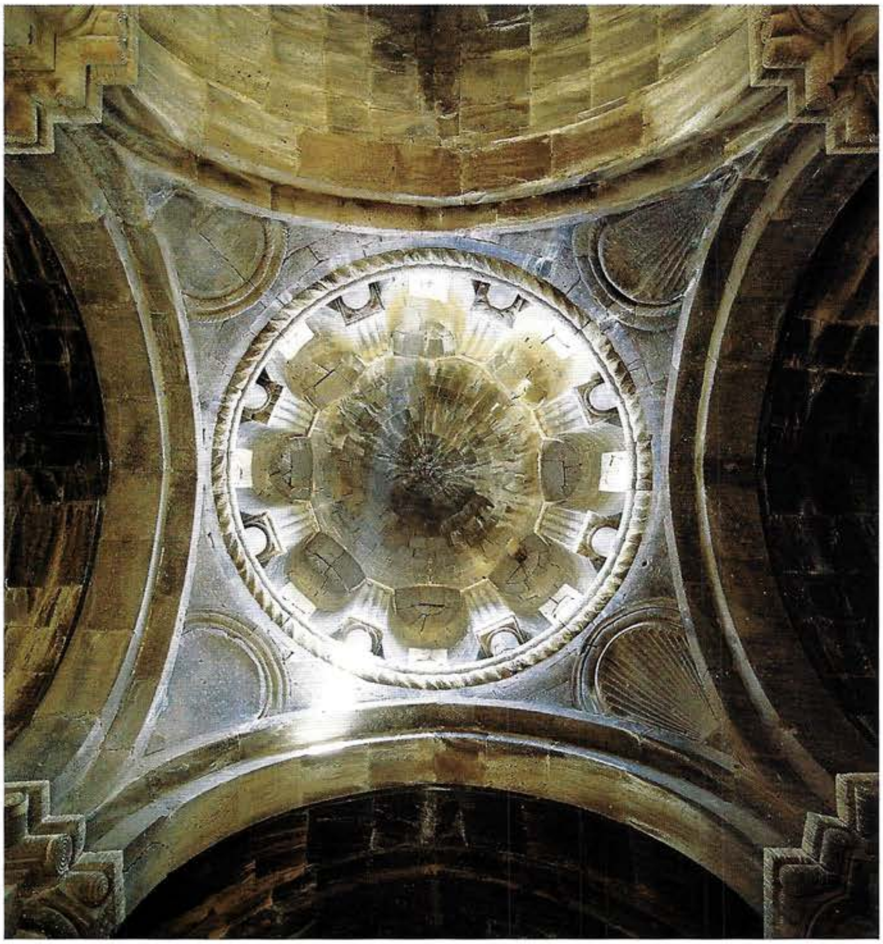
THE STONES OF KARS

Winters are fierce – minus 30°C is common. But there is bounty, too. Beyond the city of Kars (the name rhymes with *sparse*) is a rich land of plains and mountains, lakes and rivers, great flocks of sheep and herds of wild horses, a land flowing with milk and honey. It has long been border country, a conduit for invading armies, traders' caravans and nomads seeking pastures. Waves of Armenians, Georgians, Ottomans and latterly Russians have all left their mark. *Architecture in Northeastern Anatolia*, a fascinating new book of photographs by Ali Konyalı, unveils a wealth of architectural treasures, not only in Kars itself, but to north, south, east and west, from steppe to rainforest. There are medieval castles, soaring domed cathedrals, wedding-cake townhouses, even sturdy plantation mansions complete with tea gardens.



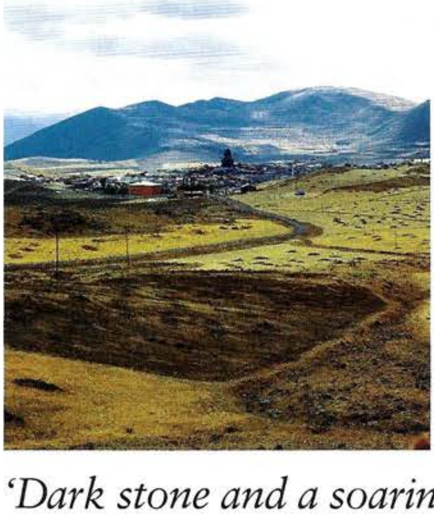
West of Kars, in the southern foothills of the Eastern Black Sea Mountains, stand the medieval ruins of Alatarla Castle (left). Built by Georgian–Byzantine rulers in the 10th or 11th century, it rises above a poplar-lined stream that is dry in summer but cascading in winter

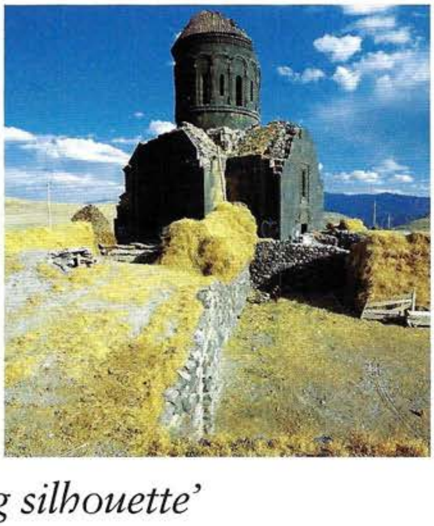
A tombstone crudely carved in human form evokes the funeral practices of the Scythians and Huns. This cemetery, near Çıldır, lies in rolling moorland north of Kars, close to the Georgian border. The river below eventually reaches the Georgian capital, Tbilisi (Tiflis)



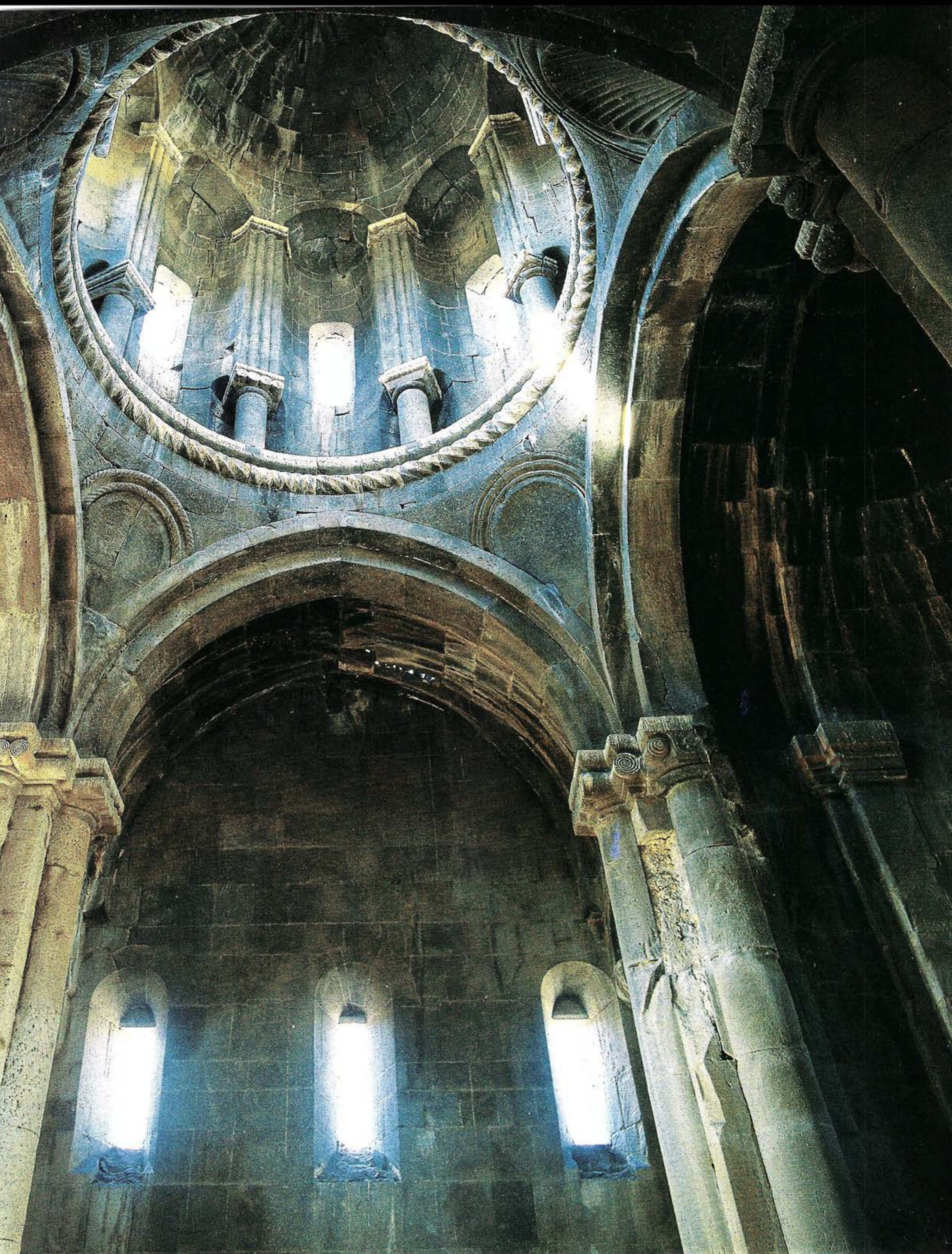
THE BLACK CHURCH OF KAĞIZMAN

The church at Çengilliköy, near Kağızman, due south of Kars, lies in a broad, gentle sweep of arable land. But its dark stonework and soaring silhouette give it a forbidding aspect. The building is 25 metres in height and cruciform in plan, with entrances on the north, east and west sides. A tall drum is surmounted by a dome capped externally with a conical roof. The church is thought to date to the 10th or 11th century, though inscriptions in Georgian mark repairs in 1362. The masonry is of magnificently hewn ashlar stone.



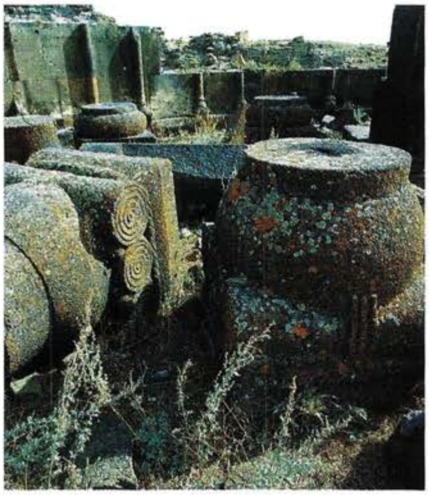


'Dark stone and a soaring silhouette'



ANI: A CITY OF CHURCHES

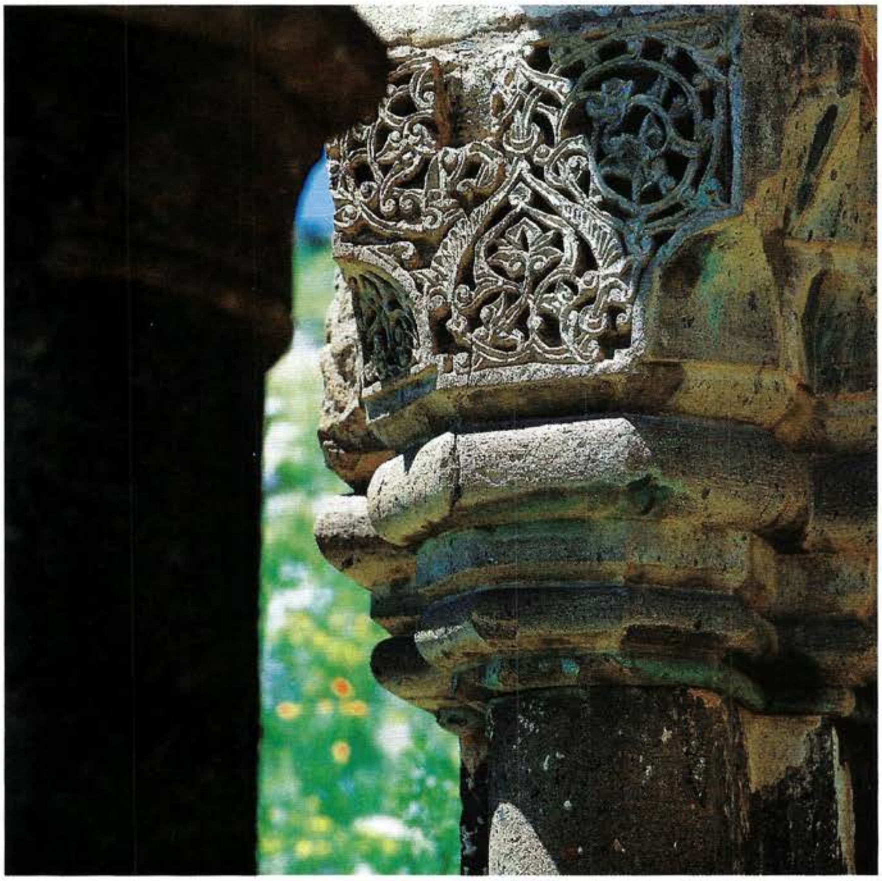
Founded in the 10th century on a plateau overlooking a huge ravine 45 kilometres east of Kars, the city of Ani controlled the old Silk Road. For a brief century it was the capital of Armenia, but was soon taken in turn by Byzantines, Seljuks, Georgians and Ilkhanid Mongols. Before it was devastated by an earthquake in 1319, Ani had a population of 100,000 and was known as the city of 1001 churches. Now nothing but the walls and a handful of churches survive, colossal stone hulks in a sea of grass. Yet it is one of the most beautiful sites in Turkey, rich in architectural detail.

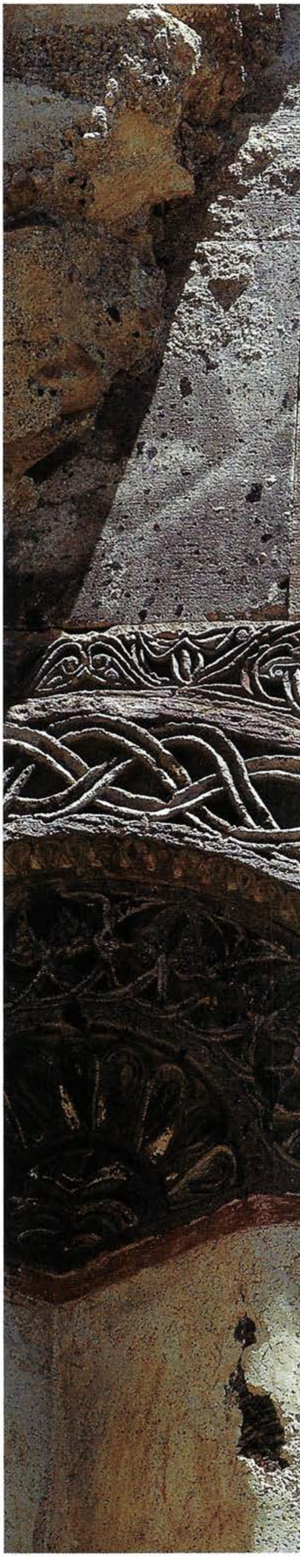


ABOVE: THE REMAINS OF A CHURCH DEDICATED TO ST GREGORY. MASSIVE AND CIRCULAR, IT WAS COMPLETED IN THE YEAR 1001 FOR THE ARMENIAN KING GAGIK. A STATUE OF THE KING, 2.5 METRES TALL, DRESSED AS AN ORIENTAL POTENTATE IN TURBAN AND KAFTAN, WAS UNEARTHED BY THE RUSSIANS IN 1905

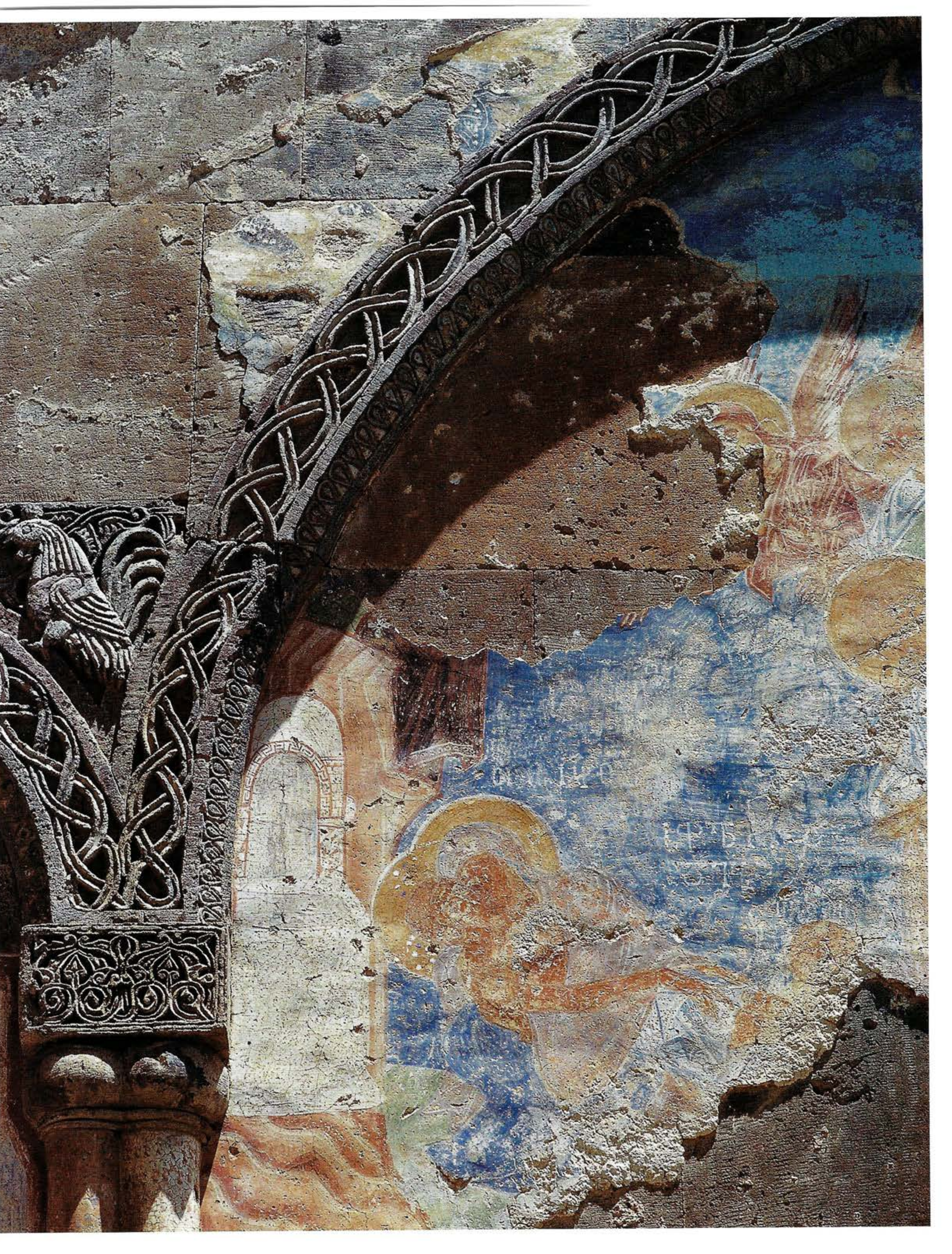
RIGHT: THE RICHLY CARVED CHURCH OF ST GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR (ŞIRLI KILISE), BUILT IN 1215, WHEN ANI WAS UNDER GEORGIAN RULE. CARVINGS OF BIRDS OF PREY, LIONS, MONKEYS, DEER AND DRAGONS ADORN A BLIND ARCADE

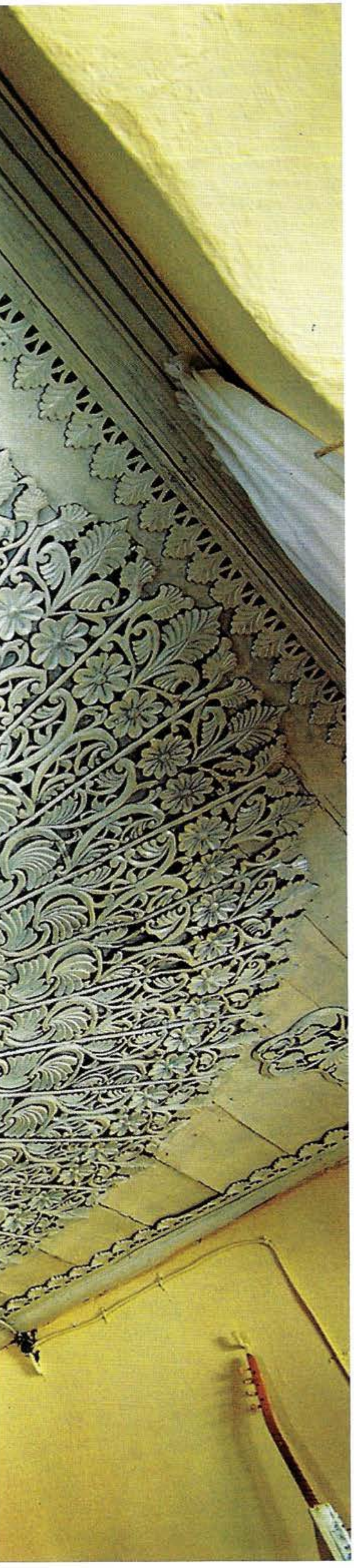
BELOW: A CAPITAL WITH STRONG CENTRAL ASIAN INFLUENCES

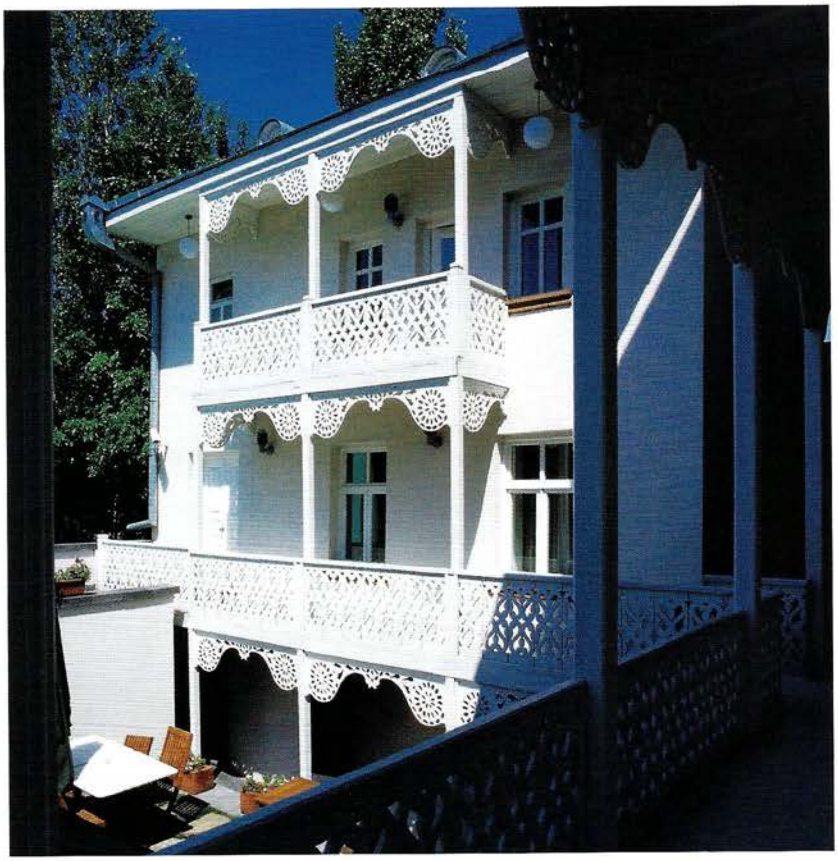




'Colossal stone hulks in a sea of grass'







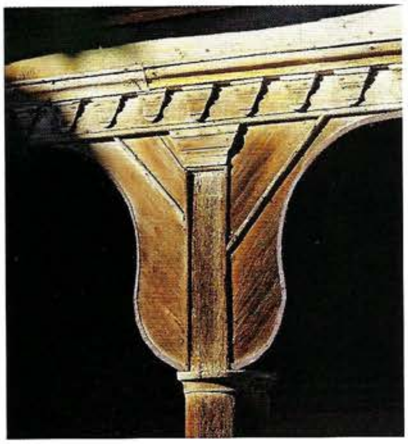
THE CITY OF KARS

A Russian garrison town from 1878 to 1917, built on a grid pattern and towered over by a forbidding citadel, the city of Kars nonetheless has touches of lightness and charm.

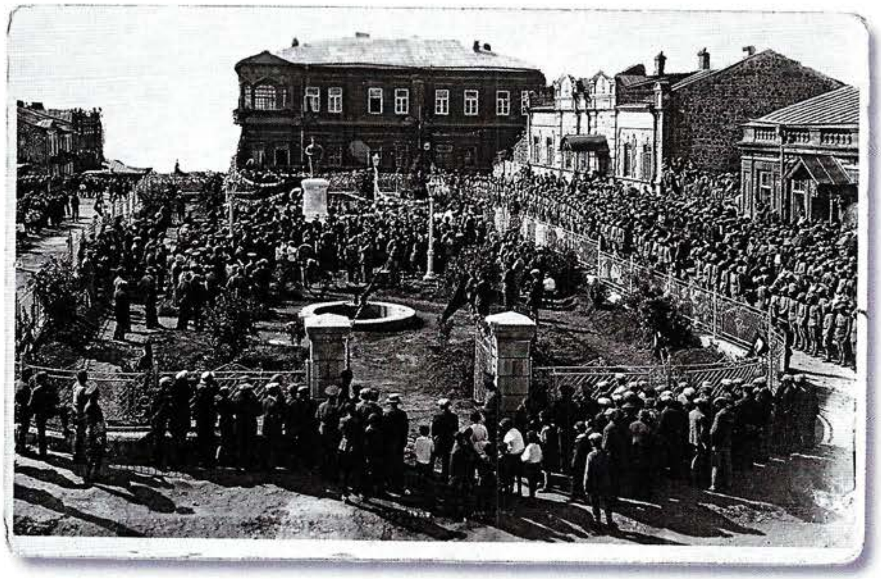
LEFT: AN EXUBERANT CEILING ROSE IN A PRIVATE HOUSE DATING FROM THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY COVERS ALMOST THE WHOLE CEILING

ABOVE: 'KAR'S HOTEL', A RUSSIAN TOWNHOUSE REOPENED AS A BOUTIQUE HOTEL IN 2004. ITS BALTIC NEOCLASSICISM IS ENLIVENED BY HINTS OF THE ORIENT: OVERLOOKING A SMALL COURTYARD ARE DELICATELY CARVED WOODEN BALCONIES THAT RECALL THE HOUSES OF TBILISI

RIGHT: A TULIP-SHAPED WOODEN CAPITAL IN A PRIVATE HOUSE



'Touches of lightness and charm'



KARS: THE RUSSIAN LEGACY

When the Russians settled in Kars, they built a new town of 16 city blocks in the 1890s, leaving the old town unchanged. Their streets were wide and the buildings low and richly decorated with mouldings, pediments and balustrades. Kars used to have the appearance of an unloved town, but it has recently been been given a facelift with fresh paint and newly planted trees.

THIS PAGE: FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS OF KARS IN 1937, THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY'S RETURN BY RUSSIA TO TURKEY

ABOVE: CUTTING A DASH ON SKIS

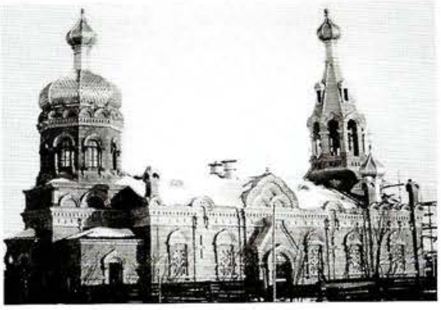
TOP LEFT: A STATUE OF ATATÜRK IS UNVEILED

CENTRE LEFT: A SLEIGH RIDE

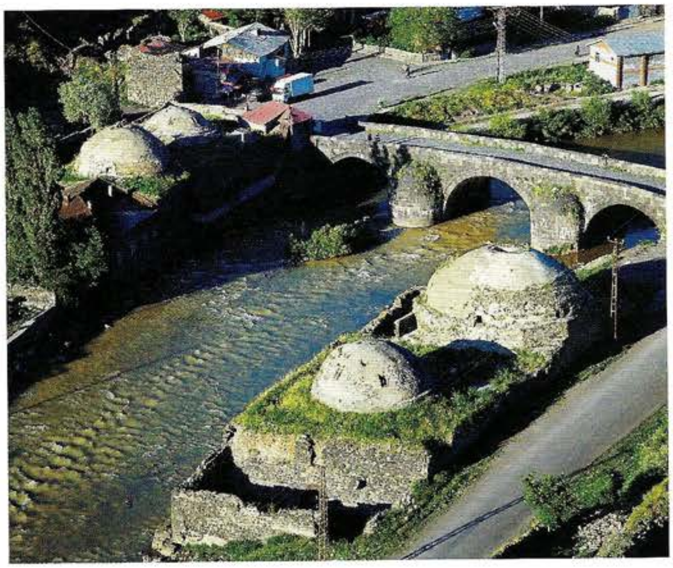
LEFT: A WINTER PARTY IN VLADIKARS, A WHITE RUSSIAN VILLAGE OUTSIDE KARS NOW KNOWN AS KÜMBETLIKÖYÜ. IT WAS SETTLED BY VARIOUS GROUPS, INCLUDING ESTONIAN LUTHERANS, VOLGA GERMANS AND MOLOKANS (OR MILK-DRINKERS), A SECT SO NAMED BECAUSE THEY REFUSED TO ABSTAIN FROM MILK ON RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FAST DAYS. BY 1962, WHEN THE LAST OF THE MOLOKANS LEFT, THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER BY SETTLERS FROM GEORGIA

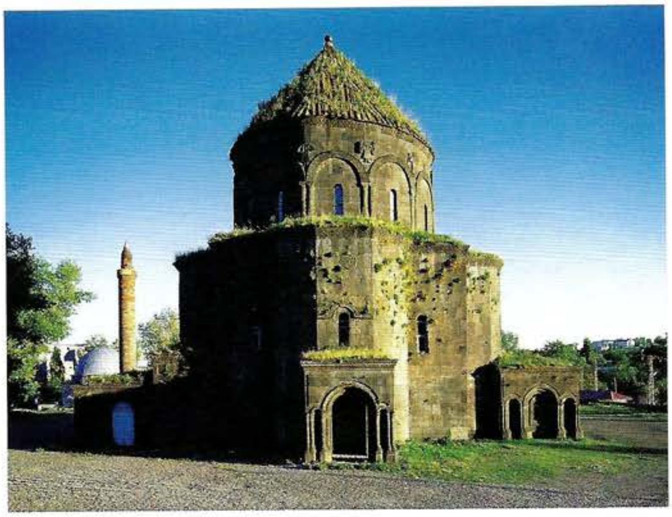
OPPOSITE: THE NEOCLASSICAL FAÇADE AND SCALLOP-SHELL ARCHES OF WHAT IS NOW THE KARS GAZI PRIMARY SCHOOL

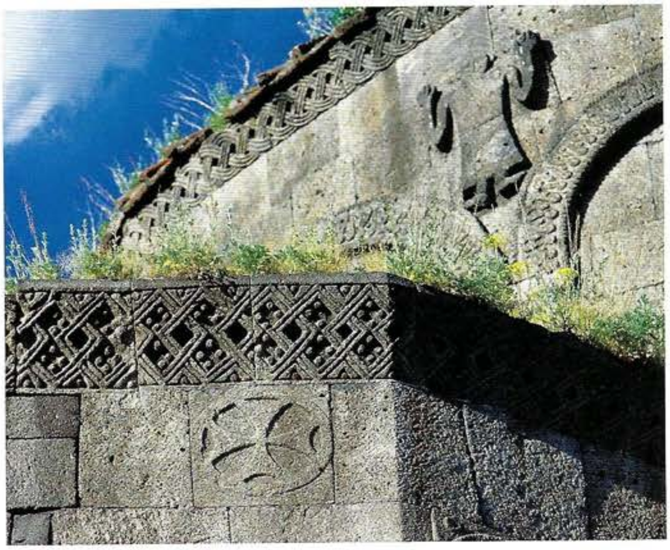
The Domes of Kars



For 1000 years every ruling power has left its public buildings. The first thing the 16th-century Ottomans did, in Kars as elsewhere, was to build elegant hammams. The medieval Armenians and Georgians lavished their energies on austere churches, the 19th-century Russians on ornate ones.







Left and above: the Russian Church of Alexander Nevsky, finished in 1890, became the Fethiye Mosque in 1984. In its Russian heyday, it boasted an elaborate belltower and a splendid dome crowning the apse, both capped with onion domes

Top right: a view of Ottoman Kars. Hammams flank the Stone Bridge (Taşköprü), built during Murad II's restoration of the city in 1579 and rebuilt in 1719 on the original supports. The Mazlumağa Hammam, on the near bank, is contemporary with the first bridge. Badly damaged in the First World War, it was restored and remained in use until recently. The 18th-century Ilbeyoğlu Hammam, on the far bank, is still in use, although its iron doors were stolen in April 2009

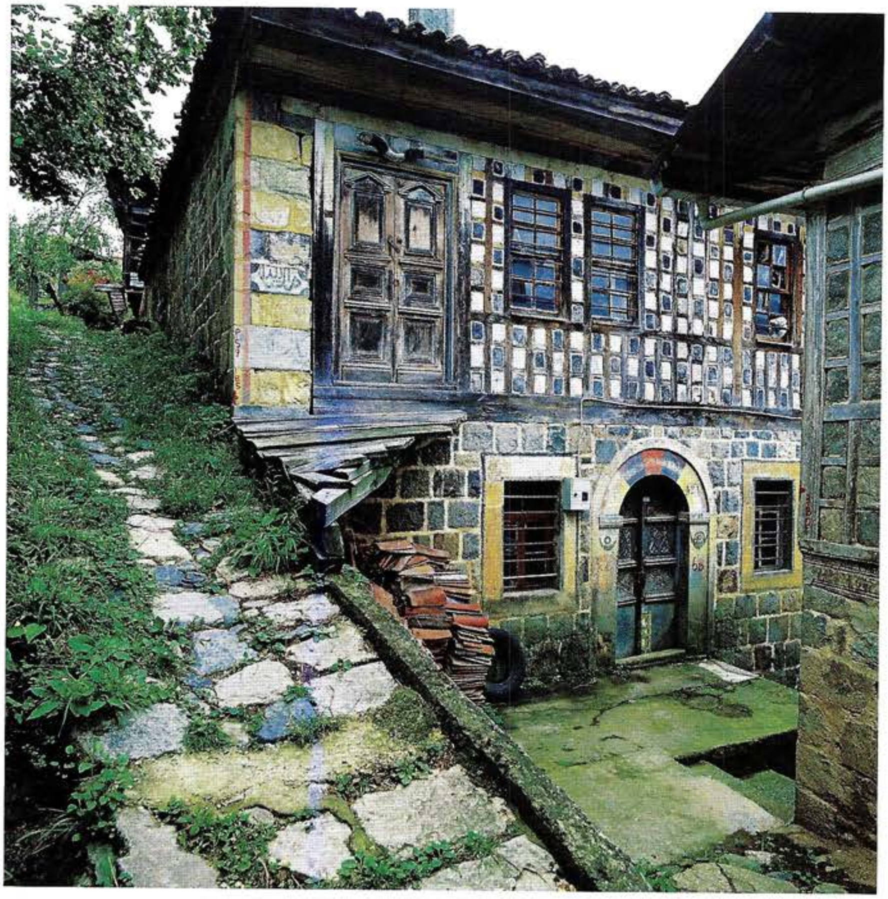
Centre: the medieval cathedral of Kars has had many occupants. It was built by King Abas (929–953), of the Georgian–Armenian Bagratid dynasty (still nominally the royal house of Georgia). The Ottomans turned it into a mosque in 1579. In 1877 the Russians converted it into the Church of the Apostles. In the 1960s and 70s it became a museum. Now it is once more a mosque

Right: a relief of one of the apostles. The decorative bands are characteristically Georgian

'A thousand years of public buildings'

MANSIONS OF THE BLACK SEA

Drive north from Kars over the Eastern Black Sea Mountains and you enter a world of rainforests. Hidden high in the hills above the region's rivers are the magnificent 19th-century mansions of Hemşin and Çamlıhemşin – some 70 of which survive.

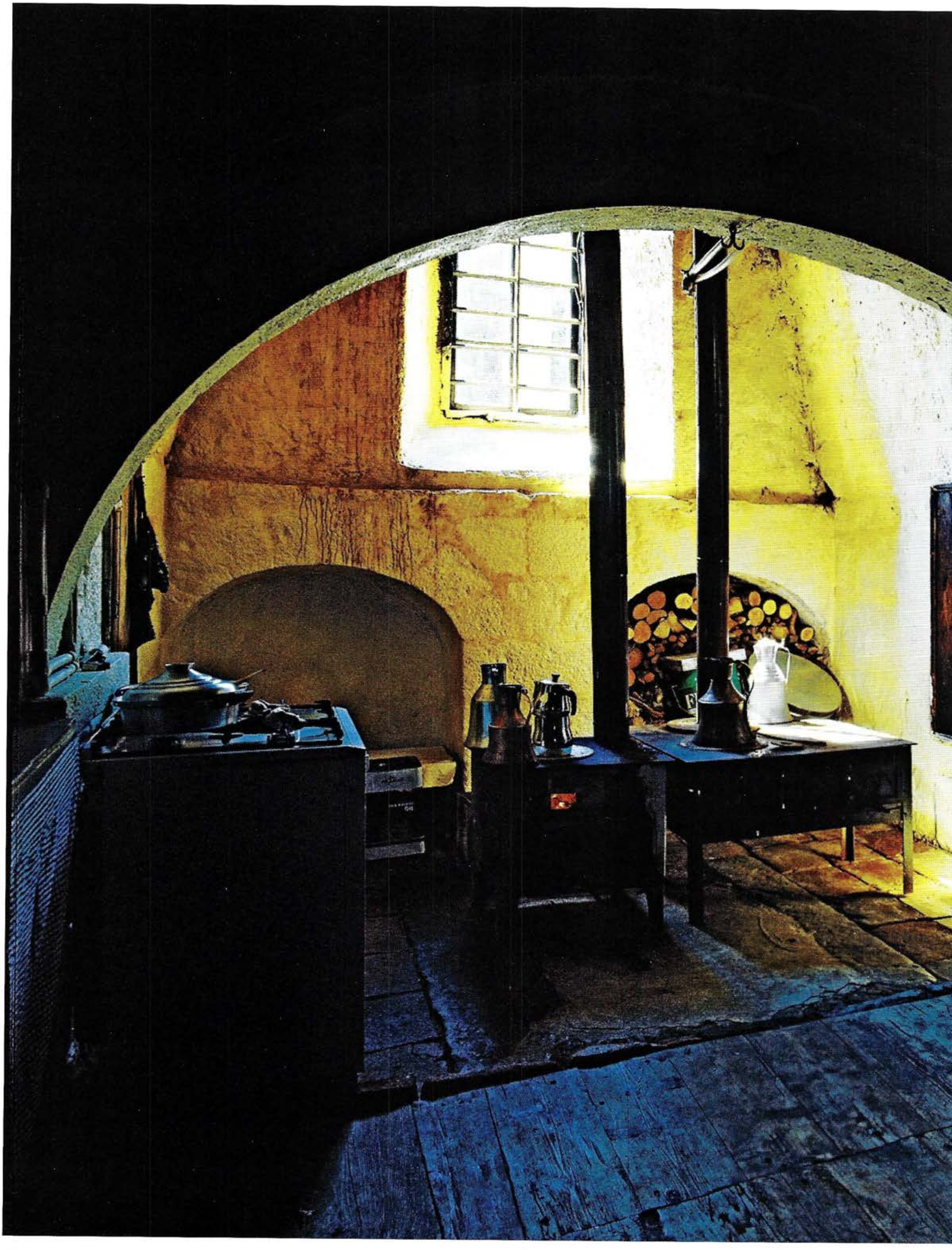


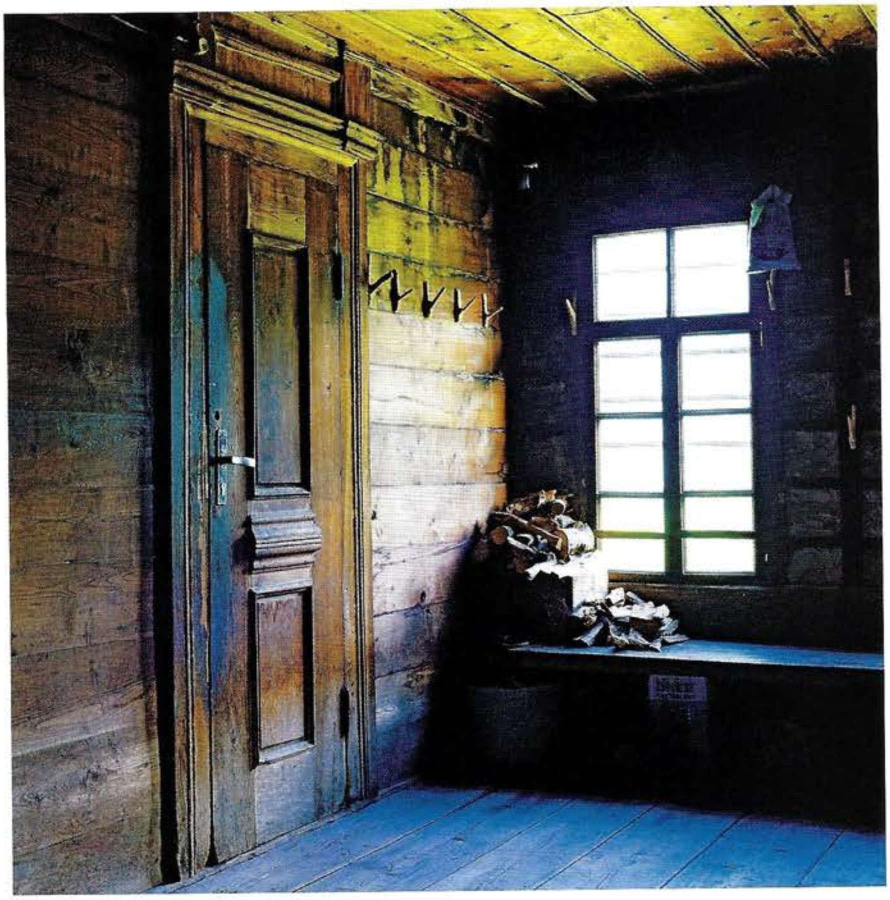
ABOVE: THE FAÇADE OF THIS FINE HOUSE — THE ABBASOĞLU MANSION IN ÇAMLITEPE, ABOVE THE RIVER HEMŞIN — HAS SMOOTH SQUARE STONES SET IN A GRID OF CHESTNUT TIMBERS, A STYLE UNIQUE TO THE REGION

OPPOSITE: THE HOUSE HAS TWO GRANARIES ('SERANDER'); THIS ONE, BUILT ON STILTS, IS PALATIAL, WITH DELICATE MASHRABIYE SCREENS

RIGHT: A PERFECT RAINFOREST MOSQUE THAT HAS AVOIDED THE PLAGUE OF THE MODERN MINARET. INSTEAD, A SMALL BALCONY IS USED TO CALL THE FAITHFUL TO PRAYER

'Magnificence in the rainforest'





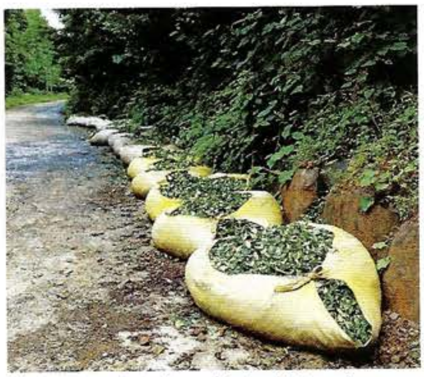
BLACK SEA MANSIONS

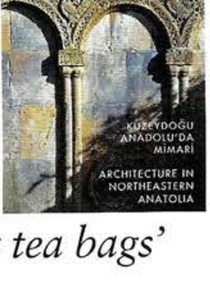
As in all of Turkey's eastern Black Sea houses, a giant fireplace, lit from behind, was the focus of family gatherings.

LEFT: THE HEARTH IN THIS HOUSE – THE HUNAOĞLU MANSION, NEAR ÇAMLIHEMŞIN – HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A KITCHEN FOR MODERN USE. THE HOUSE WAS BUILT ABOVE THE RIVER FIRTINA IN 1896–97 BY HALIL BEY, THE GREAT-GRANDFATHER OF THE PRESENT OWNERS

ABOVE: THE UPSTAIRS ROOMS ARE LINED WITH MASSIVE PINE PLANKS

RIGHT: GIANT TEA BAGS OF FRESHLY PICKED LEAVES WAIT TO BE COLLECTED BY THE TEA FACTORIES OF RIZE, ON THE COAST. MANY OF THE BLACK SEA MANSIONS TURNED THEIR LAND OVER TO GROWING TEA IN THE 1950S





The photographs in this article, by Ali Konyalı, are taken from *Architecture in Northeastern Anatolia*, published by Milli Reasürans, 2009, with text in Turkish and English by Metin Sözen, Hamza Gündoğdu and Aarand Roos. They will form part of an exhibition at the Milli Reasürans art gallery in Istanbul from October 15 to November 26 (www.millireasurans.com.tr). The project, curated by Amélie Edgü, is a sequel to the 2005 book and exhibition *Rural Architecture of the Black Sea Region*, featured in CORNUCOPIA 34. Both books are available online (www.cornucopia.net, £45 each)

'Massive planks and giant tea bags'

A COLD, HARSH REALITY

IN THIS SHORT HISTORY OF THE LONG-TROUBLED CITY OF KARS, THE CONTROVERSIAL ACADEMIC NORMAN STONE HAS SOME WORDS OF ADVICE FOR THE ARMENIANS

Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* – in Turkish, *Kar* – begins with a dramatically claustrophobic bus journey to the town in northeastern Turkey where the novel is set, Kars. It is a depressing novel, centred on the suicide of religiously cramped girls, and snow does not help, but the town's name has nothing to do with it: it is very old, probably from a Georgian root meaning "gate".

Still, in Kars the snow sometimes immobilises the place, and in the not-too-distant past the inhabitants were forced to live some way underground. There, ten years ago, they heated themselves with bricks of straw and animal dung, which give out a low calorific heat that keeps body and soul together.

In Kars today, use of natural gas is spreading, and a considerable effort has been put into improvements: a proper park, a decent hotel, a campaign to put archaeology on the tourist map. A pipeline carries oil from Baku on the Caspian towards the Mediterranean, and a railway is planned to Tbilisi in Georgia and to Baku. But back in 1990 poor old Kars made the guidebooks – Diana Darke's classic *Eastern Turkey*, for instance – as "disinviting". She says it has the two worst hotels in the world: a place to go only because of the extraordinary ruins of the old Armenian capital, Ani, which was just on the Cold War border, and which you could visit only with military permission.

Those ruins are indeed extraordinary. You drive from Kars for about an hour through flat countryside, towards what is now the Armenian border, on the Arpaçay river, and you find a long line of huge walls, with a swastika dating from the sixth century. Then you see the ruins of churches, a vast cathedral, and, down by the river, a Church of the Virgin that has survived the devastations and the earthquakes better than the other buildings, and still contains recognisable biblical fresco scenes.

An Armenian composer, a Khatchatchurian, might well write a symphonic poem about the tragedy of Ani, capital of a might-have-been Greater Armenia. If you go to a Kars hotel in the summer – the Karabağ Hotel is decent – you will find French Armenians explaining, in Armenian, to resentful small boys and their bored French mothers that, once, Armenia was an empire, with a worthy capital. However, on the Armenian side of the river, they have set up a quarry, dynamiting rock for yet more concrete somewhere or other, the explosions not being helpful to the ruins' survival. It is a sorry reminder of the absurdity of the whole relationship between Turks and Armenians.

Kars was once an Armenian city. The Armenians in 1919 bit off a great deal more than they could chew, and had fantasies of restoring Greater Armenia, including the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Kars would have been its capital. It ended in tears, and now, until the Armenian diaspora recognise that it is strongly in their interest to have co-operation from Turkey, relations across the border will consist of booms and bangs signifying nothing. For a long time, Kars languished on this dead border of the Cold War, but now things are moving again.

The immediately striking thing about Kars is that it is quite unlike any other town in Turkey, because the streets are built on a grid pattern that you find in the Baltic, and the houses, stoutly built in the local stone, over one or two floors, with double-glazing in carefully sited windows, proceed, rank upon rather dull rank, down hundreds of yards. There are eight principal roads, off which lesser roads go, at right angles, and on the major ones there are larger buildings with balconies and elaborate pediments. Nowadays, much of it is run-down, but the grander buildings were not so long ago the official buildings of a Russian province: an officers' club, complete with theatre; an opera in the professional classes' club (now a specialist hospital). Today's Cumhurriyet Caddesi was Aleksandrovka, and Faik Bey Sokak was Garnizonskaya. The headquarters of a Russian garrison was acquired by a rich Azeri, then leased out; Orhan Pamuk admits that he took some licence and allotted it to a clergy-training school, but its present-day function is secular, and anyway Kars is not notably pious – there are very few chadors, and you only hear one call to prayer at a time, as against Erzurum's bombardment. A Russian girls' school (very imposing) became the municipality.

These buildings ran down, and for a good reason: almost the entire population that had built Kars fled in 1920. The Turkish military and professional classes had to pick up the pieces, and there were complications. They were solidly secularist-republican, and when, in 1950, there was a free election, their party lost. They then did not get any money. Money went to Erzurum and Rize, which had voted for the opposition; Erzurum got the new university, Rize got subsidies for tea. Kars got nothing for years, and languished until the Soviet Union collapsed, in which period it also got its university, named Caucasus, which concentrates sensibly on animal husbandry and archaeology, and tries to connect over the border. It is sad that the obvious connection, with Armenia, works only in fits and starts.

What stands out in Kars is the fortress. Like Van, it has a huge rock, ideal for the construction of a fortress; and from the ancient kingdom of Urartu onwards, local rulers concentrated on building one that would dominate the plains all around. Kars occupied one of the essential strategic places, connecting Anatolia with the Caucasus, and invaders – Urartian, Armenian, Byzantine, Ottoman – had to have it.

Today's fortress was properly built up, in modern times, by the 16th-century Turks, in the course of their wars with Persia, but in the 19th century the British took a hand. They had decided to support Ottoman Turkey against Russia, which had been taking over the Caucasus and threatened to take over Anatolia as well, including Constantinople. Liberal opinion detested Tsarist Russia, the heartland of reactionary empire, and in any case a Russia athwart Anatolia could threaten British connections with India. War resulted, fought in the Crimea (1853–56), with a sideshow in the Caucasus when the Russians besieged Kars. A British general, Sir William Williams (1800–83), was sent with a team of officers, medical and other, to help, and in 1855 made a great name for himself.

It was an episode that showed the worst and the best of the Turks. The men fought a defensive action with extraordinary courage, only giving in when they were too weak even to hold their rifles straight. But the generals suffered from infighting and prudence, so that capitulation became unavoidable. (It was managed with great humanity. Some of the officers fighting for the Turks were Hungarian, having fled to Turkey after defeat in their war of independence in 1849. Had they been captured by Russians, they might have been sent back for execution. Williams and the Russian commander, Muravyov, arranged for them to go back to Erzurum.)

When peace came, in 1856, Kars was handed back to the Turks, and the British designed more elaborate fortifications. However, come the next Russo–Turkish war, in 1877, there was another siege, and this time round there was no direct British help. The fortress fell to a surprise attack. Russia annexed the three Trans-Caucasian provinces of northeastern Turkey, and held them for 40 years.

Kars then changed utterly. An English traveller in 1826 had described how "the majestic appearance of the place when seen at a distance, from the imposing aspect of its citadel and the extent of its walls, the houses being several storeys high and built mostly of stone, gives it an air of peculiar magnificence". But "the moment we entered the southern gate, the illusion vanished. I found long environs, dismal enough to be passages to a prison… dirt, ruin and neglect sat in the corner of the streets… Every porch and alley swarmed with hundreds of skeleton dogs, to which their masters will neither give food, shelter, nor merciful death…".

KARS IS NOT NOTABLY PIOUS – THERE ARE VERY FEW CHADORS, AND YOU ONLY HEAR ONE CALL TO PRAYER AT A TIME, AS AGAINST ERZURUM'S BOMBARDMENT

When there was a first Russian siege, in 1828, many Armenians collaborated; after peace, in 1829, they took refuge over the border, where, eventually, in the Russian province of Yerevan (at the time, two-thirds Muslim), today's Armenia began to take shape. In 1878, when Kars fell to the Russians, it was the Muslims' turn to flee.

The world now hears, again and again (and again), about what happened to the Armenians in 1915. It has heard a great deal less about what happened to the million and a half Muslims from the Caucasus who were "ethnically cleansed" in the later 19th century, losing a third of their numbers from disease and depredations, as was to happen in 1915 with the Armenians of eastern Anatolia. Their descendants do not lobby all manner of public bodies, from Montevideo to Edinburgh, for recognition of their ancestors' fate as "genocide", and do not have the hand out at modern Russia for "compensation". Some of us might regard this as a matter of dignity.

At any rate, Kars became Russian, and by 1910 it was overwhelmingly Armenian. The Tsar came on a visit just after war broke out in 1914, to inspect his troops and, though guardedly, Russia supported the cause of a Greater Armenia. Four Armenian brigades were attached to the Russian army when it invaded, although the commander complained that Cossacks had to save Muslims from their attentions, that they stole the diaspora's money, and that they should be disbanded.

Nevertheless, Kars in the Russian period became something of a model town. When it was connected by rail to Tiflis (Tbilisi), the seat of the vice-royalty of the Caucasus, it boomed. In that climate, booming is not easy, but there was a considerable cultural and educational life, with over 20,000 schoolchildren, many of them girls, and there was an interesting immigration.

Armenians were all around, taking over the professions and trade (though the ancient Armenian church on the hill below the citadel, the Apostles, was taken over for the Orthodox garrison: it has survived, in sorry state). But around Kars there were Russian villages given to a sect called the Milk-Drinkers who were crypto-Protestants and were good at food-processing. There were Greek villages, set up originally by men from the Pontus whom the Turks had used for their fortifications a century before; and even German villages, looking quite like the 18th-century Swabian ones that formed the model. There were also Swiss who set up dairies and made a version of emmental, now well known as *Kars gravyeri*. There was even a place called Novo Estonskoye, with Estonian emigrants, also Protestant, whom everyone admired, though they were thought to drink too much. Today's airport is not far from the site of Estonka, as it was known. There was still a small Russian colony in Kars in the 1980s, and nowadays Turkish television shows films of these poor old Milk-Drinkers, though they mainly emigrated to Canada.

Russian Kars ended in terrible tears. After the Revolution in 1917, and the Turks' defeat in 1918, an independent Armenia came into existence, and its leaders wanted to re-establish ancient Armenia, claiming everything in sight. Their first act was to attack Georgia over Christmas 1918. Then they had a go at everyone else, claiming British support. This period has been chronicled by an Armenian–American historian, Richard Hovannisian, in four volumes, and by volume IV even he is losing patience. He quotes with evident relish a note that the British Foreign Office made, saying that "what we want to see now is concrete evidence of some constructive and administrative ability at home instead of a purely external policy based on propaganda and mendicancy", to which the contemporary observer can only say amen.

Kars was stuffed with guns and men. The Turks, for good reason fearing what would happen if Greater Armenia took over Erzurum and points north, mustered troops. In October 1920, the Armenians of Kars just ran away, and the Turks' chief difficulty, as they entered the citadel, was to find the room where the Armenian generals were skulking. Then they marched almost to Yerevan, where a deal was done with Moscow: Turkey gave up claims to Azerbaijan, and in return got back eastern Anatolia.

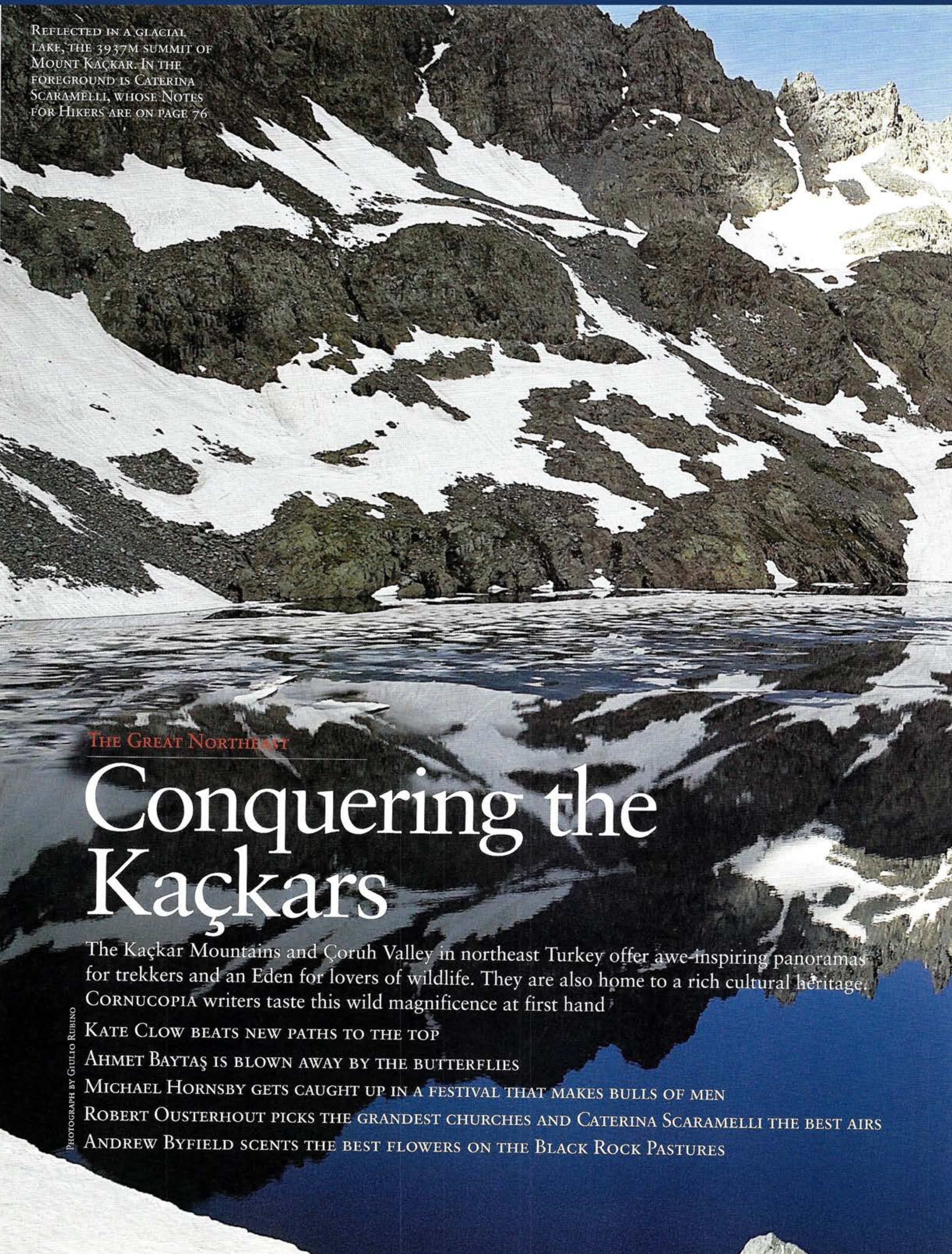
It is a nasty and sad episode, and you wonder why a people as intelligent as the Armenians ended up with a Paraguay rather than an Israel. I have written to Professor Hovannisian, asking whether people of good will on both sides cannot sort things out. He must know better than I do that the "propaganda and mendicancy" line, in this case claims of "genocide", needs severe qualification, that today's Armenia desperately needs connections with Turkey before, poor and land-locked, it loses its entire population. No answer.

Post-Russian Kars went through a bad couple of generations. However, as with Izmir, something of the old fertility did survive. The officers and civil servants of Atatürk's Turkey who went there kept the schools and the theatre going: to this day, Kars is more go-ahead in a republican sense than Trabzon or Erzurum, and has its own little diaspora in western Turkey.

One of my most admired friends is a Kurd from one of the old Greek villages who, leaving school early, got himself via this and that to Lokal, one of the nicest restaurants at the end of İstıklâl Caddesi in Istanbul. He used me intelligently to get good English, on top of a 12-hour day, and is now the wine waiter in a posh place over the Bosphorus, corresponding with the *FT*'s Jancis Robinson, whose husband I also used to teach.

That is the spirit of Kars, and if the Armenian diaspora can ever be persuaded to see sense, it would be Armenia's future as well. ◆

Norman Stone is professor of history at Bilkent University. His new book, *The Atlantic and Its Enemies 1945–1999*, will be published next year by Penguin



Reflected in a glacial lake, the 3937m summit of Mount Kaçkar. In the foreground is Caterina Scaramelli, whose Notes for Hikers are on page 76

THE GREAT NORTHEAST

Conquering the Kaçkars

The Kaçkar Mountains and Çoruh Valley in northeast Turkey offer awe-inspiring panoramas for trekkers and an Eden for lovers of wildlife. They are also home to a rich cultural heritage. Cornucopia writers taste this wild magnificence at first hand

Kate Clow beats new paths to the top

Ahmet Baytaş is blown away by the butterflies

Michael Hornsby gets caught up in a festival that makes bulls of men

Robert Ousterhout picks the grandest churches and Caterina Scaramelli the best airs

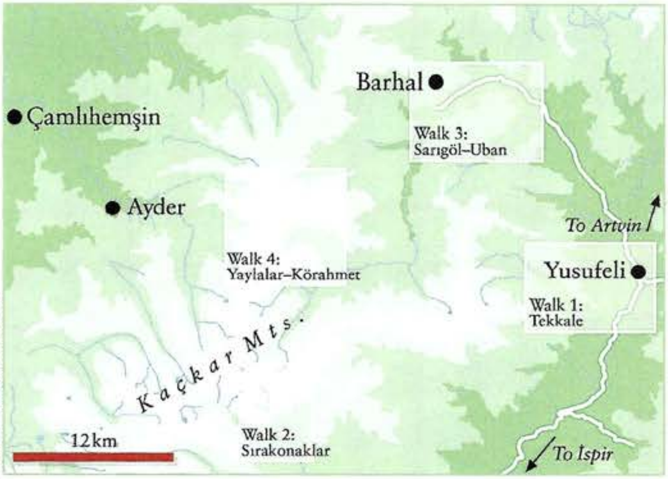
Andrew Byfield scents the best flowers on the Black Rock Pastures

Photograph by Giulio Rubino

FOUR WALKS IN THE KAÇKARS

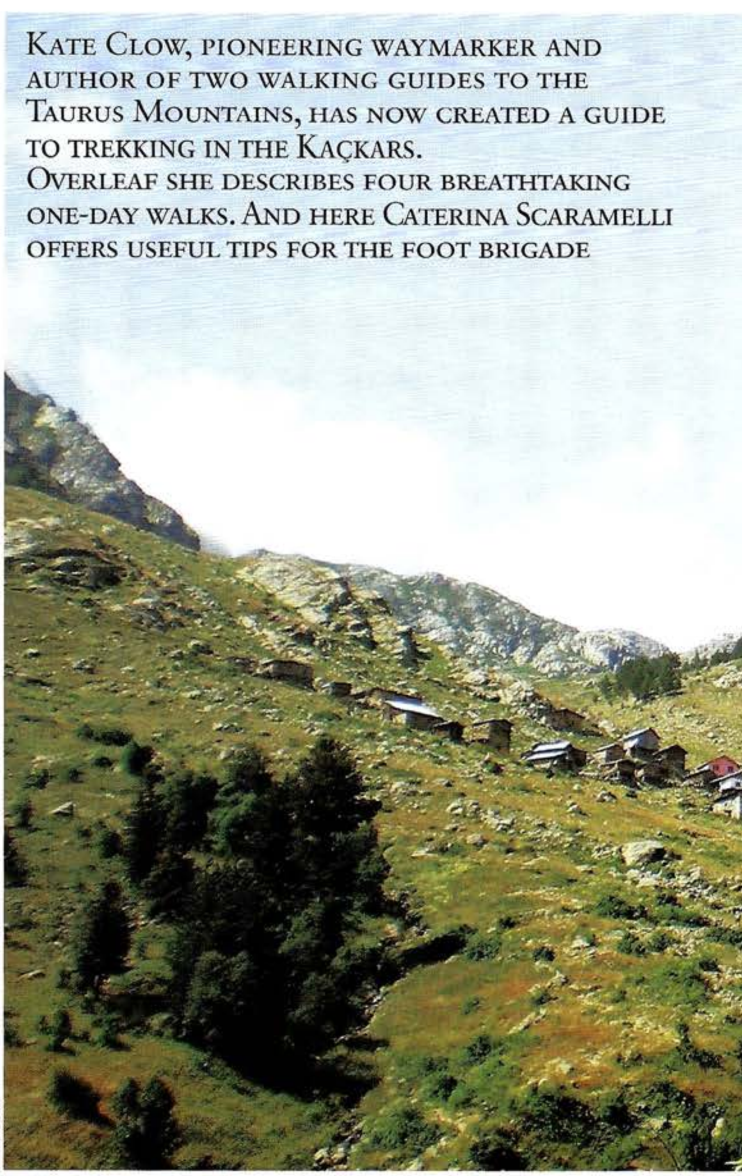
KATE CLOW, PIONEERING WAYMARKER AND AUTHOR OF TWO WALKING GUIDES TO THE TAURUS MOUNTAINS, HAS NOW CREATED A GUIDE TO TREKKING IN THE KAÇKARS.
OVERLEAF SHE DESCRIBES FOUR BREATHTAKING ONE-DAY WALKS. AND HERE CATERINA SCARAMELLI OFFERS USEFUL TIPS FOR THE FOOT BRIGADE

The Kaçkar range, writes *Kate Clow*, is the lushest, most spectacular mountain area in Turkey, fronting the Black Sea to the north and the valley of the Çoruh River to the south. The area is now becoming better known, with Turkish tourists congregating at the hot springs and forests of Ayder, while foreign visitors head for the base-camp for Mount Kaçkar (3934m). But the opportunities for wonderful, lower-level, longer-season trekking on the old tracks that link tiny villages and yaylas are still largely unexplored. Here we offer four rewarding treks through flowery meadows and fir forests and along ridges that can be walked outside the high season and enjoyed in solitude



MAPS BY SUSANNA HICKLING

KAÇKAR DIVIDE: LUSH HILLS TO THE NORTHWEST, ARID TO THE SOUTH



KATE CLOW

ABOVE: MODUT YAYLA IN THE SUNNY SOUTH. BELOW RIGHT: BROWN BEARS A

WALKING THE KAÇKARS
NOTES FOR HIKERS
BY CATERINA SCARAMELLI

1 EQUIPMENT Before setting out, ensure all equipment is suitable for cold, damp weather, that your tent is waterproof, your sleeping bag warm. Reduce the contents of your backpack to essentials: the trails can be steep and slippery and a heavy pack will spoil your walk. Boots must be solid enough to deal with snow and rocks, and preferably waterproof. Walking sticks, though not essential, help balance and reduce pressure on knees. Up-to-date guidebooks and maps are a priority. Be sure to take a torch, Swiss Army knife, lighter, basic first-aid equipment, sunglasses, a map and compass, plus enough socks to keep your feet dry. Some equipment can be found in Pazar (on the north side of the mountains) and Yusufeli (on the southern side).

2 WEATHER Cool breezes, humidity, perennial snows and fog give the mountains a special aura, painting them shades of dark green and white. Do not underestimate the weather. It is better to leave early, especially on the north side, where thick fog normally comes in the afternoon. July sees snow above 2700m; by August this has melted, but the fog may be thicker. Choose lower-altitude walks before July and after the end of August. Ask locals about the weather before leaving.

3 WATER The area is embroidered with rivers, waterfalls and streams. This water is ice-cold and delicious, so you need only carry a small reserve. Never drink downstream of villages, yaylas and pastures.

4 TRAILS Expect to find more than one, especially around villages and in pasturelands. Always maintain a sense of your general direction and the position of landmarks. Locals know the trails very well and may offer to accompany you. Animals also have their trails, often leading to a source of water. An attentive and lucky walker might spot bears' footprints. This shy animal scavenges the beehives for honey, but keeps a distance from hikers.

5 CAMPING A tent will allow you to spend the night in breathtaking locations, lulled by the whisper of rivers, and waking with the first rays of the sun. Away from campsites, choose a spot not easily visible from the road so as to avoid inconvenient encounters. Ask permission from the nearest house before putting

ATCHED OVER BY ANKARA'S MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY (METÜ). SO FAR, 150 HAVE BEEN COUNTED NEAR YUSUFELI AND 300 IN THE KAÇKARS

up your tent close to a village; they may well invite you in for tea or dinner. Pick a smooth, flat area on solid terrain at a low altitude; empty riverbeds, dips and steep slopes are dangerous.

6 HOSPITALITY When passing through a yayla, make a point of exchanging a few words with the villagers. Mountain dwellers are extremely hospitable, and you will often be invited in for steaming tea and *mıhlama*, a local dish of melted cheese and eggs with stove-baked bread. For non-Turkish speakers, a few basic words of greeting will be enough to spark curiosity and sympathy. It is worth enquiring into family histories: they are often surprising and interesting.

7 SOCIAL LIFE Entire villages often move up with their herds to the summer yayla on a specific day; you might join them on the walk. Each village holds a day- or weekend-long festival in its yayla: expect dances, music, wrestling and warm hospitality – especially if you learn the dance steps. Any grassland can become a stage for dances around a *tulum* player at any time. Follow the piercing sound of the bagpipe and join in.

8 LOCAL DELICACIES The honey here is among the best in the world, and delicious home-made cheeses enrich every meal. To the north you will find cornflour, hazelnut and black-cabbage soups; to the south, sweet watermelons, tasty rice, great vegetables and fruit. Fish is fresh and flavoursome. Buy from village shops or direct from villagers.

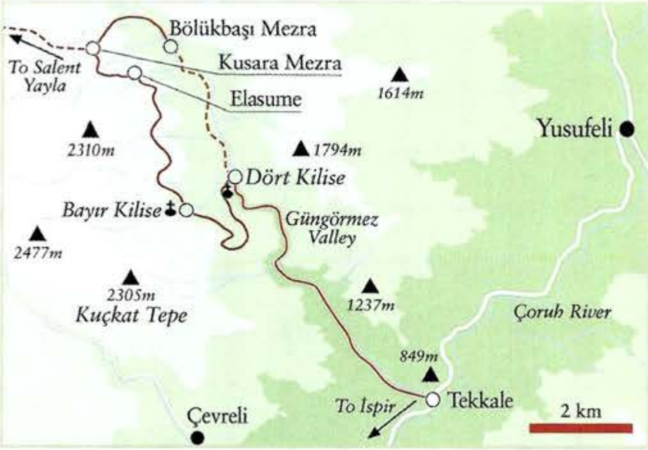
HÜSEYIN AMBARLI / BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION LAB, METÜ

9 RELAXATION Between walks, find a place to sit and contemplate. My favourite is the lush valley behind Çat, a small village with a *pansiyon* and a restaurant reached by the road from Pazar, past Zilkale castle and some spectacular stone bridges. A short walk leads to wonderful views of the upper village. From Çat follow the valley, a long but easy walk amid flowery pastures and raspberry heavens to foggy Hacıvanak Yayla. ◆

WALK 1

Tekkale – Elasume – Bayır Kilise – Dört Kilise – Tekkale

SIX HOURS, May to October



This is a stroll around the villages and churches of the fertile, wooded Güngörmez Valley, mostly easy-going, though the descent from the chapel is steep and slippery in places. You could arrange to be collected from the church, but passing vehicles will give you a lift. (I have just done this walk again and cleared a new route around a landslide which had damaged it since last year. Saw a huge snake – in fact the dogs saw it first and stopped me walking into it.)

STARTING POINT

Tekkale, a lively rice-growing village on the banks of the Çoruh, 7km southwest of Yusufeli. Two shops, teahouses and regular buses from Yusufeli bus station.

HIGHLIGHTS

Bayır Kilise: a tiny stone chapel perched on a promontory over a steep-sided valley, below a steep, forested wall. The plain exterior is mainly intact, but the frescoes inside are obscured by soot and the gallery above the door has fallen. It was probably once a hermitage chapel; there is a spring and other ruins nearby.
Dört Kilise: a church surviving from a monastery in the valley bottom. Almost hidden amid walnut groves, this huge building (28 x 22 x 22m) is an aisled church with a gallery and a covered entrance from the adjoining monastery. Built in the tenth century, the decoration consists of simple spiral half-columns and geometric motifs. The interior gives the impression of vast space.

THE WALK

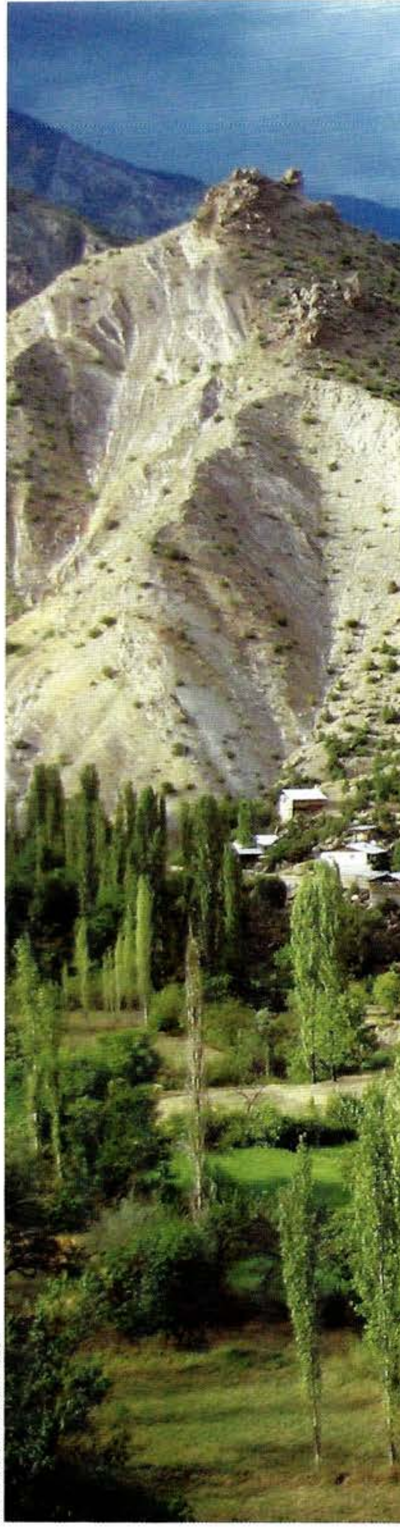
Take the (only) early-morning bus from **Tekkale** up the Güngörmez Valley and get off at **Bölükbaşı** bridge. Continue on the left side of the stream to a ford over the river; cross this and continue up the track between wild strawberries. Keep right at the junction and, at the top of the rise, take the path up and to the left into a meadow and left to a tiny yayla of six houses. The path continues past a spring to **Elasume**. This compact *mezra* (spring-autumn village) of three-storey stone and timber houses is tucked among orchards on a shoulder overlooking the valley.
Follow the water channel into the village and turn left on the good, gently rising path running through forest to **Bayır Kilise**. Cross the valley to the ridge beyond and turn down a little-used track to a stream. Follow this through woodland, passing a spectacular waterfall, then down the right bank on hairpins descending to **Dört Kilise**. After exploring the church, turn down the dirt road and walk through the scattered farms and *mezra* of the wooded valley leading down to **Tekkale**.

WHERE TO STAY

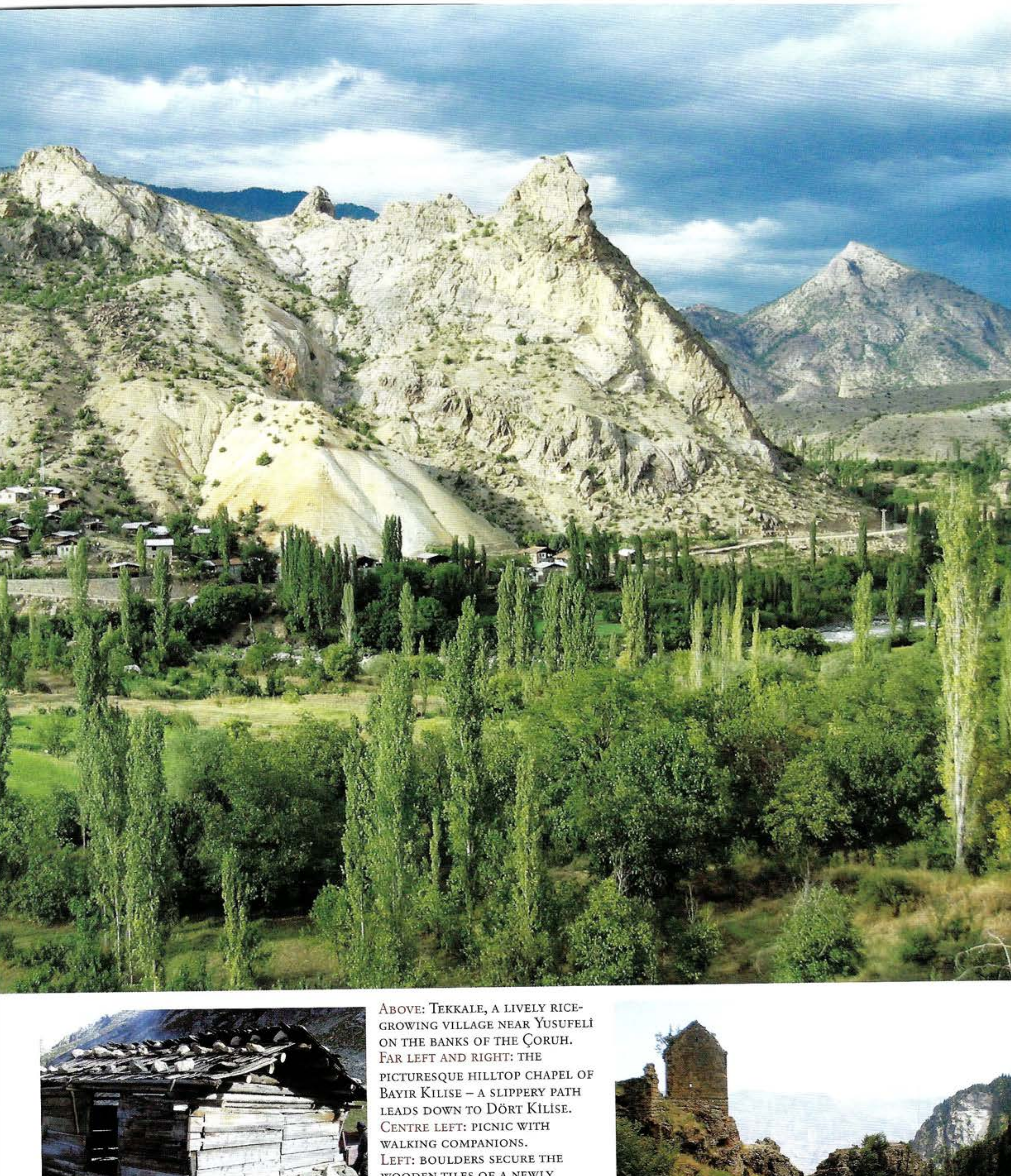
Cemil's Pension, by the bridge in Tekkale (+90 466 811 2908 or +90 536 9885829, cemil_pansiyon@hotmail.com). Rooms with shared bathroom, or you can sleep on the terrace; breakfast and dinner available. **Luman** at the village teashop, on the signed road to Dört Kilise, has overflow accommodation. Or stay in Yusufeli and take a taxi to the start. It would also be possible to start the walk from Salent Yayla, where there are tiny wooden houses to rent (book through Cemil's Pension, above).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

WHITE-WATER RAFTING: on the Çoruh; day rafting from Yusufeli; longer trips based at Cemil's Pension (June to July).
SALENT YAYLA: wooden huts on the yayla are a starting point for the trek over Güngörmez Pass (mid-July to September) or for exploring the area around two lakes (mid-June to October).
CHURCHES AND CASTLES: Peterek and Erciş castles and churches at İşhan, Oşk Vank and Haho are an easy drive away.
FESTIVALS: advertised on posters in the villages and Yusufeli. Tekkale festival at Bölükbaşı takes place on the second weekend in July.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE CLOW

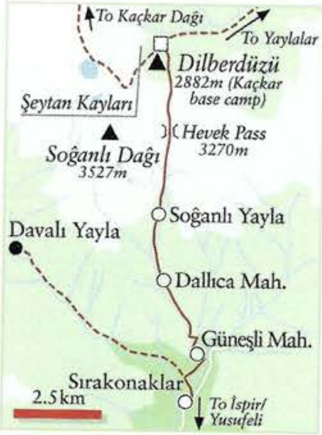


ABOVE: TEKKALE, A LIVELY RICE-GROWING VILLAGE NEAR YUSUFELİ ON THE BANKS OF THE ÇORUH.
FAR LEFT AND RIGHT: THE PICTURESQUE HILLTOP CHAPEL OF BAYIR KILISE – A SLIPPERY PATH LEADS DOWN TO DÖRT KİLİSE.
CENTRE LEFT: PICNIC WITH WALKING COMPANIONS.
LEFT: BOULDERS SECURE THE WOODEN TILES OF A NEWLY RESTORED HOUSE IN SALENT YAYLA, ACCESSIBLE – AND RENTABLE – FROM JUNE TO LATE SEPTEMBER

WALK 2

Sırakonaklar – Hevek Pass

3270m – Dilberdüzü
(Kaçkar base camp)
Seven hours
July to September



This walk is an alternative, underused way to reach Dilberdüzü, a high meadow which is the base camp for the ascent of Mount Kaçkar (3934m). The peak can only be climbed from mid-July to the end of September, but you could walk from the camp to Olgunlar, three hours down the Hevek Valley. Alternatively, hire a mule and driver to carry a tent and supplies to the camp. Gaiters advised.

Starting point

Sırakonaklar (rows of mansions), an amazing extended village of mainly 19th-century houses in the valley of the same name, on a tributary of the Çoruh River. Sırakonaklar, 50km from Yusufeli or 40 from İspir, is reached by car or afternoon bus from İspir bus station.

Highlights

Stupendous views: from the Hevek Pass, Kaçkar appears as a huge, cold Christmas pudding, cut along a fault-line and iced with snow.
Şeytan Kayalar: the rock buttress above the camp glows gold in the morning sun as alpine choughs whirl overhead.
Flowers: Dactylorhiza orchids and primulas in the lower valley; corydalis, gentians and other alpines nearer the pass.

The walk

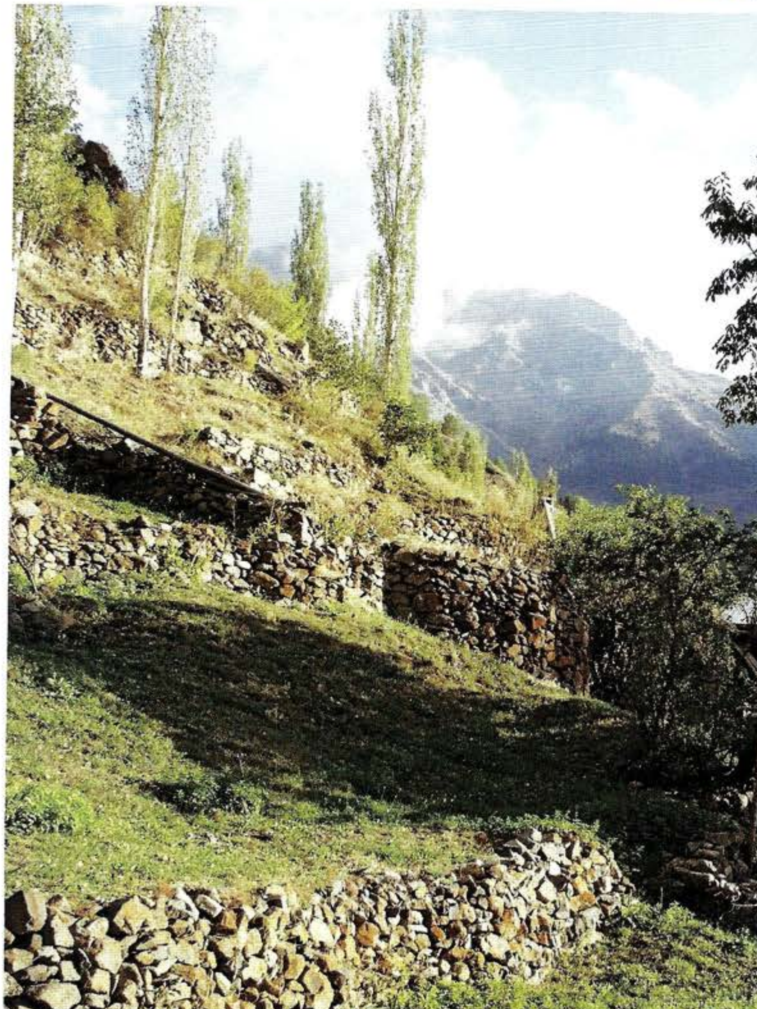
At **Güneşli Mahallesi** (the top of the village), the valley divides. Take the left branch of the road up hairpins in the central tributary valley to the last bridge. Follow first the left, then the right bank of the stream, zigzagging upwards to an outcrop. Cross the stream to the west bank and continue past the deserted huts of **Soğanlı Yayla** and up a ramp to the upper valley bowl. Continue steeply up, past a side-stream, until the valley levels. Cross the stream and continue north, aiming at the right side of the pass above – there is no clear path. On the rim, take a diagonal path through a rock outcrop and continue down hairpins, then left towards a stream-bed. Follow a winding cairned path across the moraine hillocks below to the campsite.

Where to stay

There are five home-stay pensions in the valley. Most suitable are the two at the north end: **Güneş Pansiyon** (+90 442 467 2050) and **İnci Pansiyon** (+90 442 467 2039). English-speakers can phone Egemen Çakır on +90 532 6064096 for help with logistics.

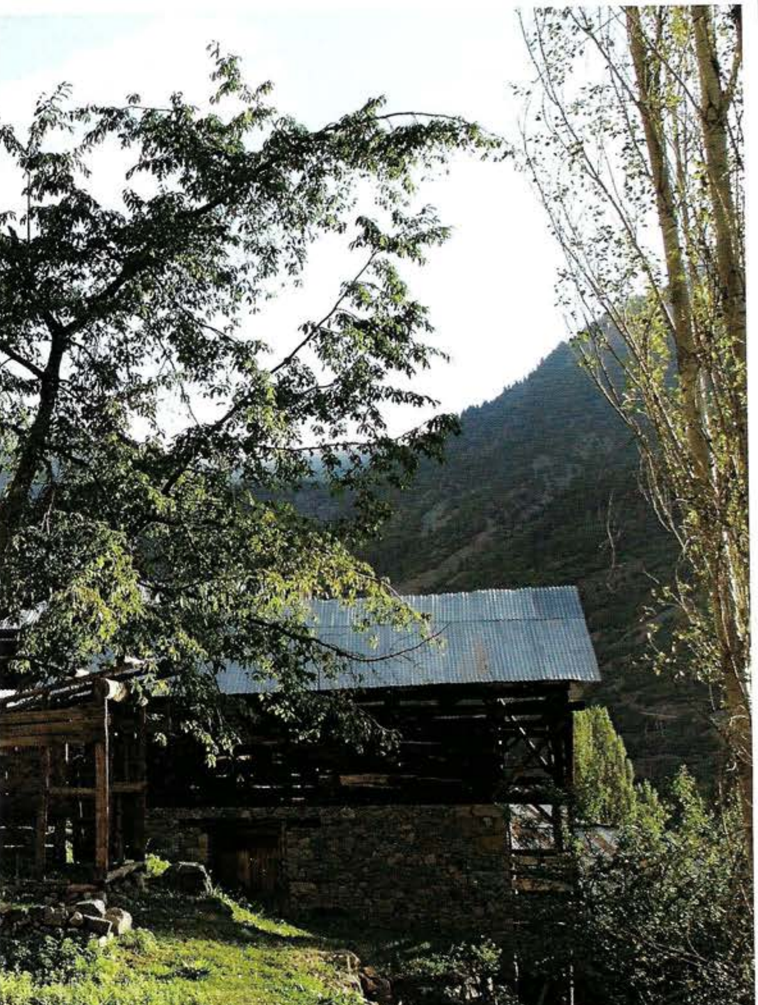
Additional activities

Rafting on the Çoruh: İspir is the starting point for a 4/5-day itinerary (June for experts, July for amateurs).
Mountain biking: plenty of dirt roads and tracks for mountain-bike exploration (July to September).
Sırakonaklar's 19th-century Armenian church and houses: the square stone church (*kilise*, or *çilise* in Kaçkarlı Turkish), now roofed in corrugated iron instead of tiles, is used as a mosque. Many beautiful stone houses cluster round it.
Davalı Yayla: a 4-hour walk takes you to a simple yayla of stone houses in the upper valley, where herds of goats provide milk for special cheeses, which you can buy from the villagers.



Top: shelling beans in Sırakonaklar. Life and songs in the area revolve around the staple vegetable.
Right: a barn on the terraced slopes of this beautiful village

Photographs by Kate Clow



WALK 3

Uban – Patrikara Yayla – Sitele Tepe – Sura Yayla – Uban – Sarıgöl

SEVEN HOURS,
June to September

This is a circular walk to Sitele Tepe, a high point (2745m) on an isolated, grassy ridge just above two abandoned yaylas on the treeline. The yaylas are reached by a steep, underused footpath from Uban. The climb to the ridge and descent to the second yayla are very steep and pathless, but over grass. Both yaylas are linked by paths to the *mezras* clustering at the head of the Taşkıran Valley. Uban is the highest. You should arrange for a lift to the start of the walk, but you could walk back to Sarıgöl.

STARTING POINT

Uban is a tiny *mezra* of only three houses set in walnut orchards at the end of the Taşkıran Valley, a long walk (5–6km) or a short minibus or taxi ride from Sarıgöl.

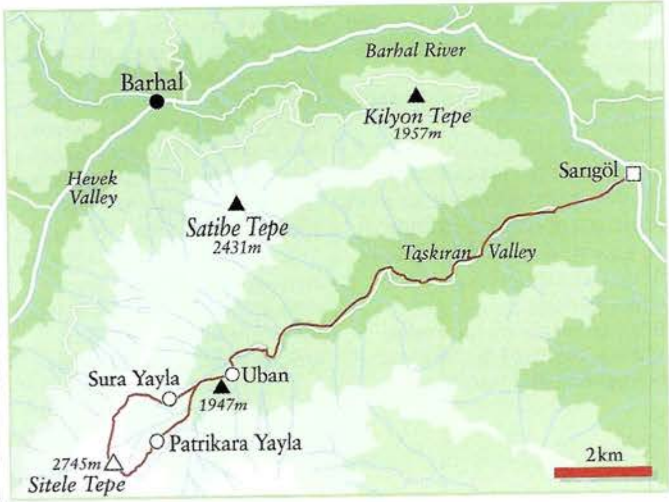
HIGHLIGHTS

WALKING ON AIR: the ridge-top grass is dense and flowery, grazed by wild horses and goats. THE VIEWS: as you reach the ridge, the serrated range of the Kaçkar and Altıparmak Mountains cuts the sky, with mist spilling over the passes. UBAN: a lovely *mezra* of large stone houses; only one is inhabited, by a friendly old man and his sick wife. The valley leading to Sarıgöl also contains some superb old buildings.

THE WALK

A word of warning: in a thunderstorm this ridge is very exposed to lightning strikes. If a storm blows up, get off the ridge-top, discard metal objects and crouch down. It will pass very quickly.

From **Sarıgöl** drive up the Taşkıran Valley to the highest point. Follow the track on the right bank to **Uban.** A few stone houses cluster round a mill, a bread oven and stacks of firewood. Fill up with water; there is no other reliable source. Behind the mill, a path heads up the forest edge and climbs into the trees. At the junction, keep straight on, dipping into the valley and climbing an eroded path to the crumbling houses of **Patrikara Yayla.** From here, climb up the grassy slope to the ridge. Turn right and walk to the top of Sitele Tepe – do not try to circle it via paths on the east flank. On the right is a wide, ridged, steep-sided bowl with four tiny yaylas on the spurs just above the treeline. On the left is the drop to the Hevek Valley and, behind, the Kaçkar massif. Descend the hill and pass stone ruins to an east-pointing spur. Turn right down the spur, right to a spring (which could be dry), then left through trees to Sura Yayla, a cluster of abandoned huts above a dried-out spring. The path downwards continues straight down the ridge, then descends to the left through zigzags until it rejoins



ABOVE: LOOKING DOWN ON THE VALLEY OF THE BARHAL RIVER. LITTLE-USED PATHS LEAD TO THE HIGH GRASSY RIDGES (WALK 3)

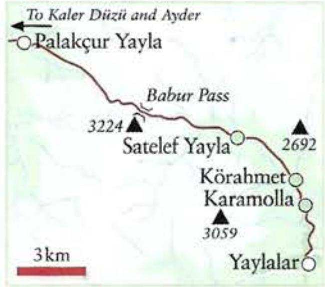
the first path. Continue to Uban, then join the dirt road and walk down to Sarıgöl.

WHERE TO STAY

İhtiyaroğlu Agara Pansiyon (+90 466 824 4086), or River Hotel (+90 466 824 4345), on the Barhal River, 5 and 12km south of Sarıgöl respectively. Both have trout farms and restaurants, and can arrange transport to the start of the walk.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

BIRDWATCHING: the ridge is a good place for spotting raptors over the forests; in spring the riverside teems with migrant warblers.
BEARS: there are hundreds of bears in the Barhal area – easiest to see mornings and evenings in autumn, when they raid orchards. Check for prints and droppings.
GEORGIAN CHURCH AND CHAPEL AT BARHAL: the magnificent church, contemporary with Dört Kilise but in better condition, is an easy walk from the centre of Barhal; the chapel is on the opposite ridge.
BARHAL FESTIVAL: the 2nd or 3rd weekend in July, includes bullfighting and wrestling.



WALK 4

Karamolla – Satelef Yayla – Babur Pass

3070m – PALAKÇUR YAYLA
EIGHT-AND-A-HALF HOURS, mid-July to September

The easiest and quickest way to cross the main Kaçkar ridge from south to north. Recently reopened and cairned, the higher parts are on zigzags over rock and scree, but the approach is over open grassland. Even when the south is sunny, there may be mist or rain to the north, and snow patches persist into August. Take warm clothes, poles, waterproofs and compass or GPS. Wear long trousers and use insect repellent around your ankles. At lower altitudes, especially in the evenings, the horse-flies are vicious, though they mainly bite below knee-level. You could arrange to be met at Palakçur.

STARTING POINT

Karamolla, in summer a bustling village of large stone houses round a village spring, set just above the treeline on a valley-side. Small shop/teahouse. Reached by the Yaylalar dolmuş from Yusufeli bus station (afternoons, the journey takes 3.5 hours); ask to go to Karamolla.

HIGHLIGHTS

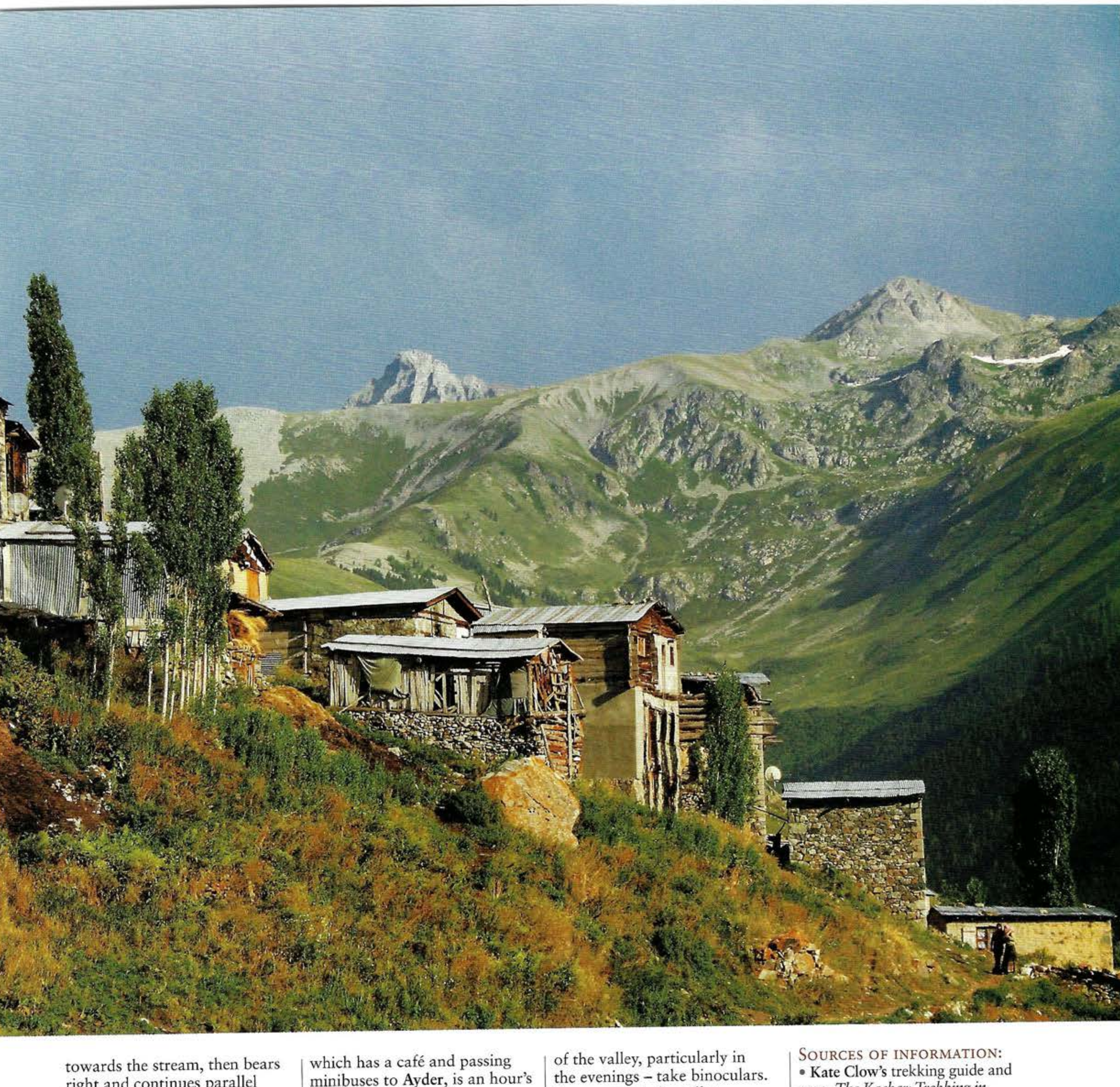
TRADITIONAL CULTURE: a glimpse of traditional pastoral lifestyle at Satelef. The families who herd animals here (including magnificent bulls) migrate over the pass from the north side. Palakçur is also a cattle-farming yayla.
CHAMOIS: listen for falling rocks; they indicate herds of chamois.
BUTTERFLIES: the rare Caucasian apollo, only found over 2500m; the larger Parnassius apollo is common on thistles in August.
ROCK FORMATIONS: approaching the ridge, splintered granite rocks form pinnacles and spires. More cluster in the upper Palakçur Valley.
WILD RASPBERRIES: Much juicier and larger than wild strawberries. There's a good patch just before Satelef.

THE WALK

Walk the old road from **Karamolla** to the village of **Körahmet**. Climb steps between the houses to a track that continues along the valley. An easy rising walk, crossing several streams, takes you to the tiny stone houses of **Satelef**, clustered round a spring; in winter their corrugated-iron roofs are stored inside the buildings. Continue on a fainter path bearing northeast and, after the second stream, turn up onto a cairned path rising to the pass; it runs with a stream on the right, then enters a cirque with a snowy pool. From here the climb is hemmed in by cliffs and partly over scree; listen for chamois disturbing rocks above. Looking back, you can see the river running down the green valley like a silver ribbon. On the pass is a roofless stone *barınak* (shelter), and beyond that the path descends through zigzags over scree

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE CLOW

LEFT: THE TALL, SOUTH-FACING HOUSES OF KARAMOLLA, STARTING POINT FOR THE EASIEST TREK ACROSS THE KAÇKARS – BE READY FOR MIST AND RAIN ON THE NORTHERN SIDE. ABOVE: THE CLUSTERED STONE HOUSES OF KÖRAHMET



towards the stream, then bears right and continues parallel with, and high above, the water. Cross a wall that was built to retain the bulls and keep right at a junction. At the boggy head of a side-stream, cross left to a grassy ridge. This descends to **Palakçur Yayla**, where large timber and stone houses loom out of the mist. They have enclosed yards for the cattle and are connected by paved paths. You reach the road below via a zigzag descent to the main stream and a walk along the bank to the bridge. **Kaler Düzü**, which has a café and passing minibuses to **Ayder**, is an hour's walk down the road.

WHERE TO STAY

One home pension, next to the shop (only July and August): **Hüseyin Zorba** (+90 466 832 2066, +90-535 9516426). Or stay in the **Çamyuva pension** (+90 466 832 2001), at Yaylalar, and walk (45 minutes) or get a lift to the start.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

BEARS: from the balcony of the pension you can frequently see bears on the opposite slope of the valley, particularly in the evenings – take binoculars.

BUTTERFLIES: the valley below Karamolla, as far as Olgunlar, is famous for its mud-puddling blues and other butterflies.

BIRDS: Caucasian black grouse frequent the rhododendrons; snowcock are possible just below the pass – listen for the loud, distinctive call.

HANDICRAFTS: the village women make gloves, hats and other items incorporating traditional designs. Take tea with them in a pavilion overlooking the valley. ◆

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- **Kate Clow's** trekking guide and map, *The Kaçkar: Trekking in Turkey's Black Sea Mountains* (from her website, trekkinginturkey.com, or cornucopia.net, price £13.99)
- choruh.com and UNDP's map and leaflet *Endless Çoruh Valley*
- **Doğa Derneği** (Nature Society) for information on wildlife, local foods, etc (kackarlar.org)
- **Rafting on the Çoruh: Alternatif Raft** (alternatifraft.com) and **Birol Alkan** in Yusufeli (+90 466 811 3620, birol_alkan@hotmail.com)
- **Middle Earth Travel** for guided holidays in the Kaçkars and advice on out-of-season programmes (middleearthtravel.com)

THE FLUTTERBY BALL

The Kaçkar Mountains are heaven for butterflies, as Ahmet Baytaş, economist by trade, ecologist by nature, discovered when he returned to Yaylalar, the village of his birth

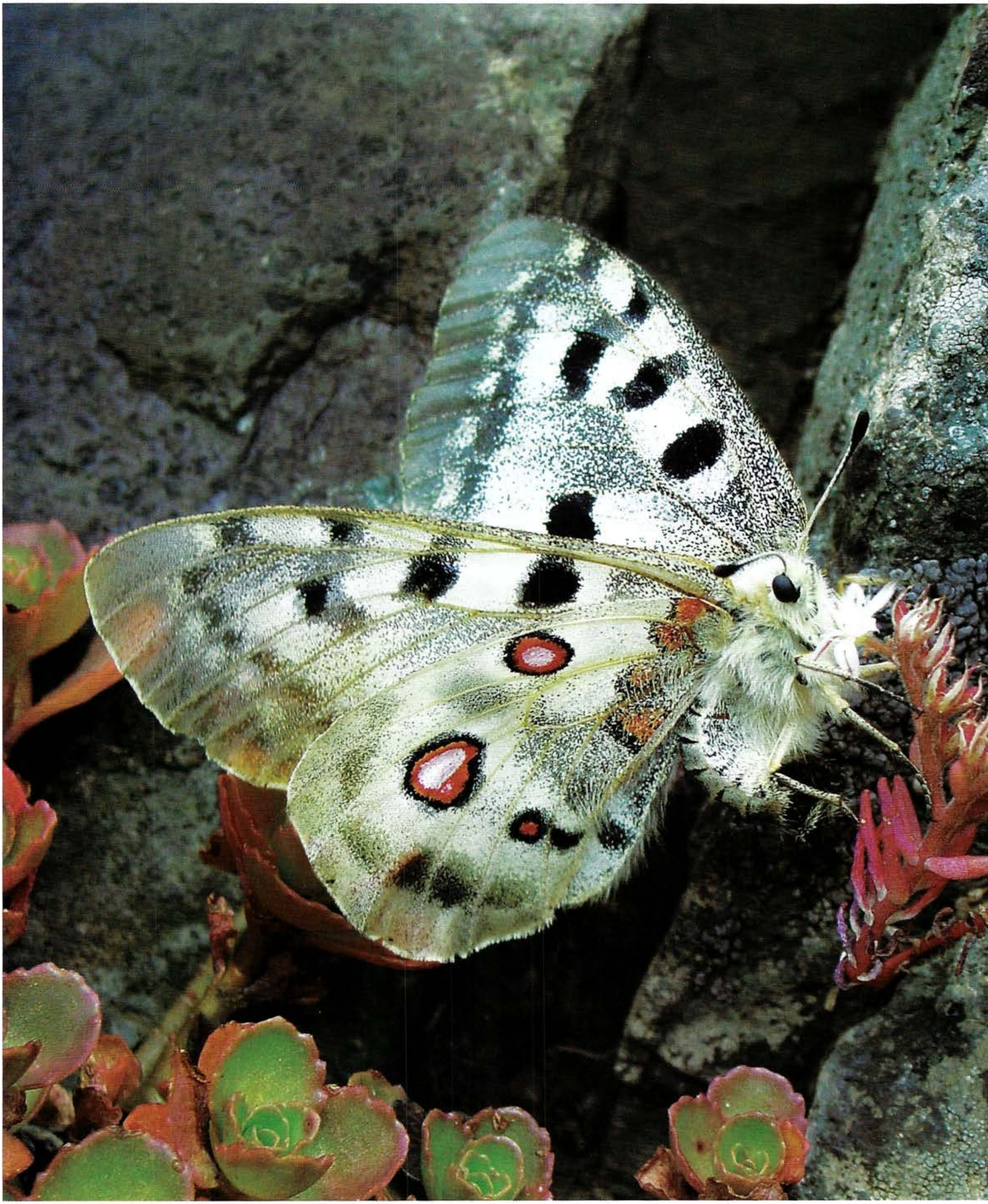
On July 15, 1999, I woke early, just before sunrise, with a sense of excitement. That evening I would be leaving my apartment in Montclair, New Jersey, for northeastern Turkey in search of butterflies. I would spend a few days around Yusufeli, in Artvin province, and a week in my birthplace, Yaylalar, a nearby village in the foothills of the Kaçkar Mountains. We had left in 1959, when I was three, for a better life in Istanbul, and I had never returned.

It was an unforgettable trip. I was swept away by the area's breathtaking beauty, its imposing mountains, magnificent alpine meadows and, above all, the extraordinary diversity of its wild flowers, insects and birds. The butterfly numbers were astonishing. In some areas, particularly by streams and on damp ground, the density reached several hundred a square metre. Around one small, muddy footbridge I found perhaps a thousand individuals of a couple of dozen species mud-puddling. I watched large numbers of ringlets and graylings gracefully bob and weave among the grasses, noted half a dozen species of brilliantly coloured coppers along the streams and a remarkable variety of fritillaries on the flowery slopes. Especially abundant were the Silver-studded Blue, Chelmos Blue, Ripart's Anomalous Blue, Damon Blue, Caucasian Spotted Fritillary, Dusky Meadow Brown and Black-veined White; I saw hundreds of the threatened Marsh Fritillary.

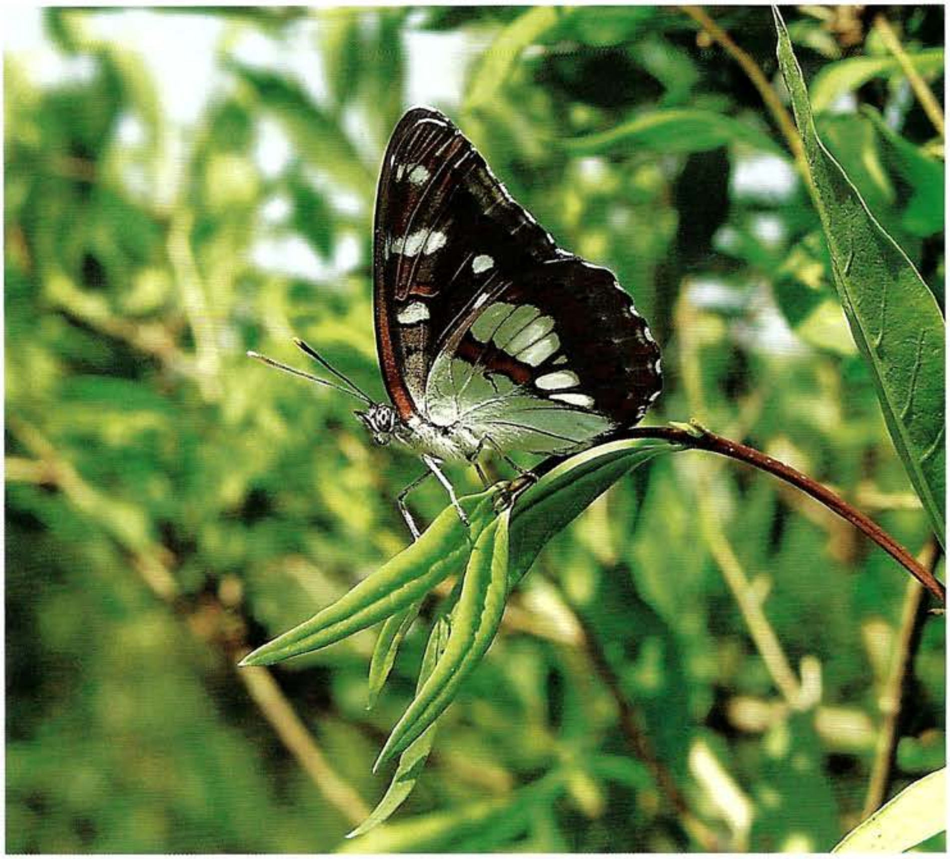
At the base of Bulut Mountain, at the village's northern edge (around 2500m), a small, wet meadow yielded excellent mountain species: the Mountain Argus, Clouded Apollo, Balkan Copper and the very rare Caucasian Skipper. Higher hillsides offered specialities like the subspecies *modestus* of the gorgeous

Chelmos Blue (Polyommatus iphigenia)

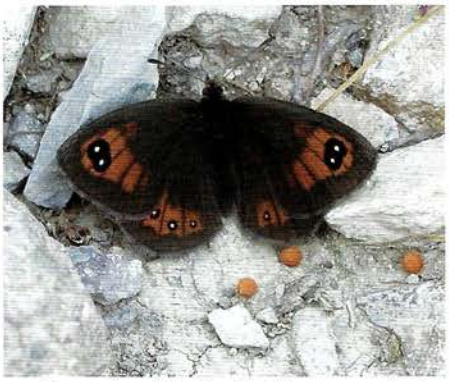
Photographs by Ahmet Baytaş



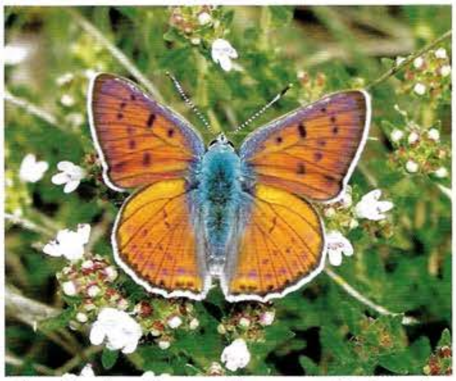
Apollo (Parnassius apollo)



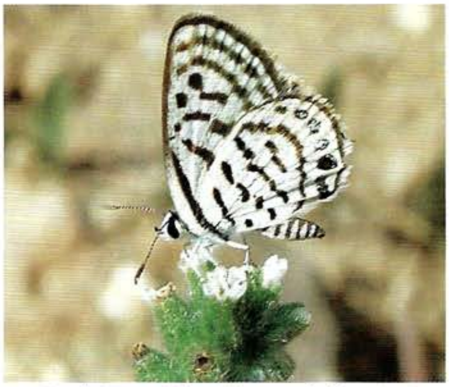
Southern White Admiral (Limenitis reducta)



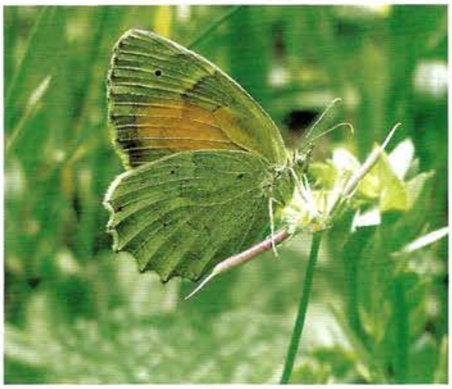
Caucasian Ringlet (Erebia graucasica)



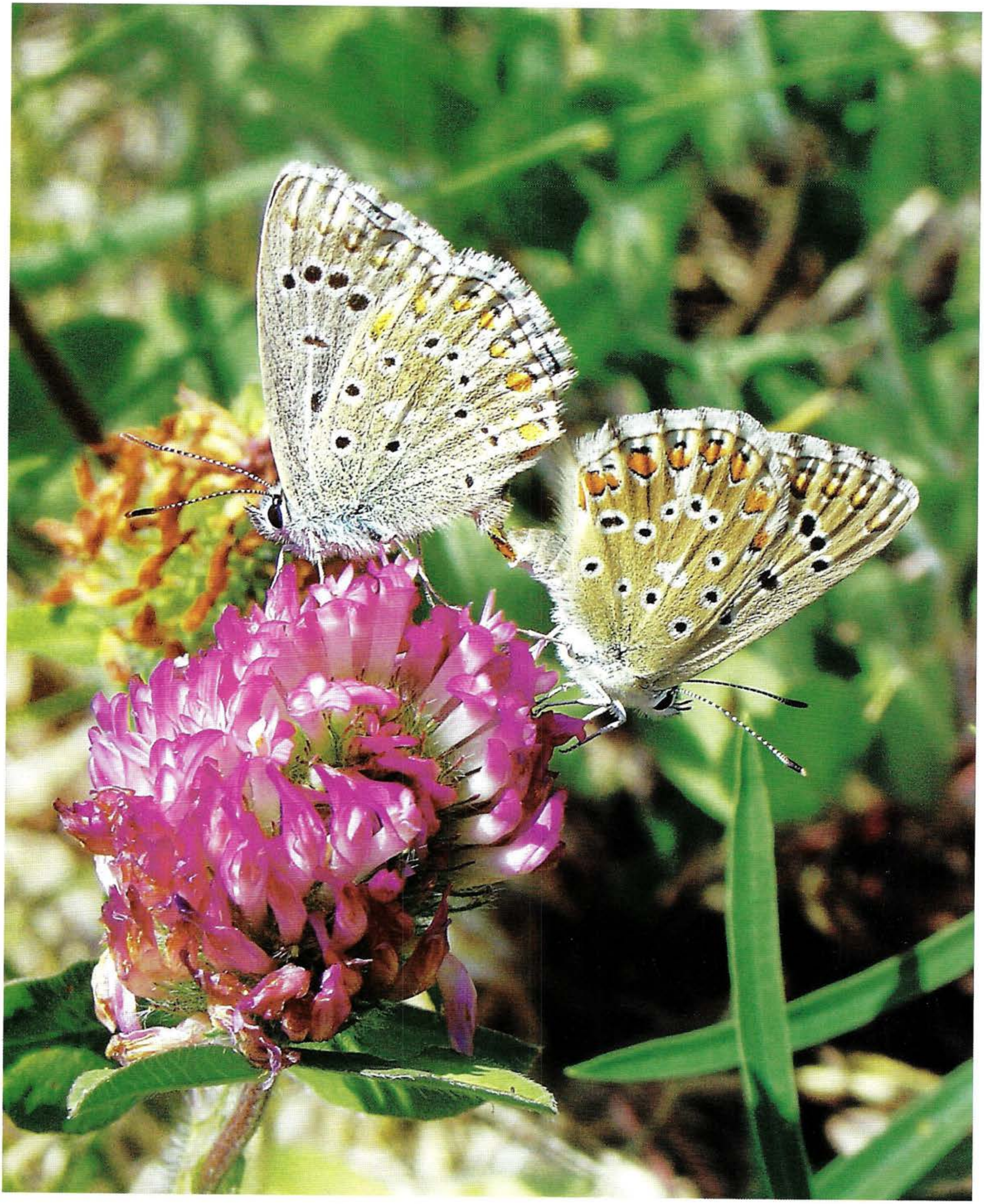
Purple-shot Copper (Lycaena alciphron)



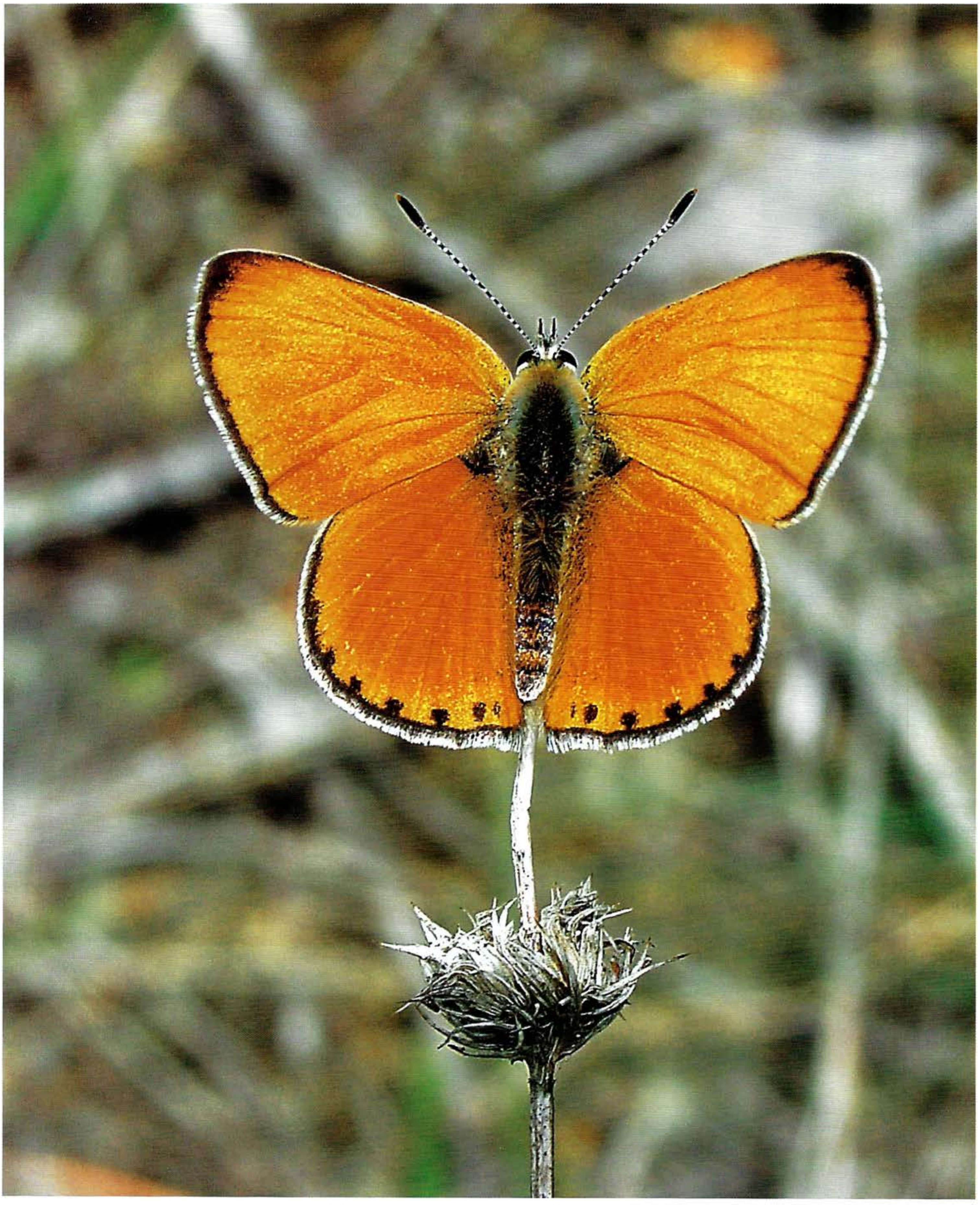
Little Tiger Blue (Tarucus balkanicus)



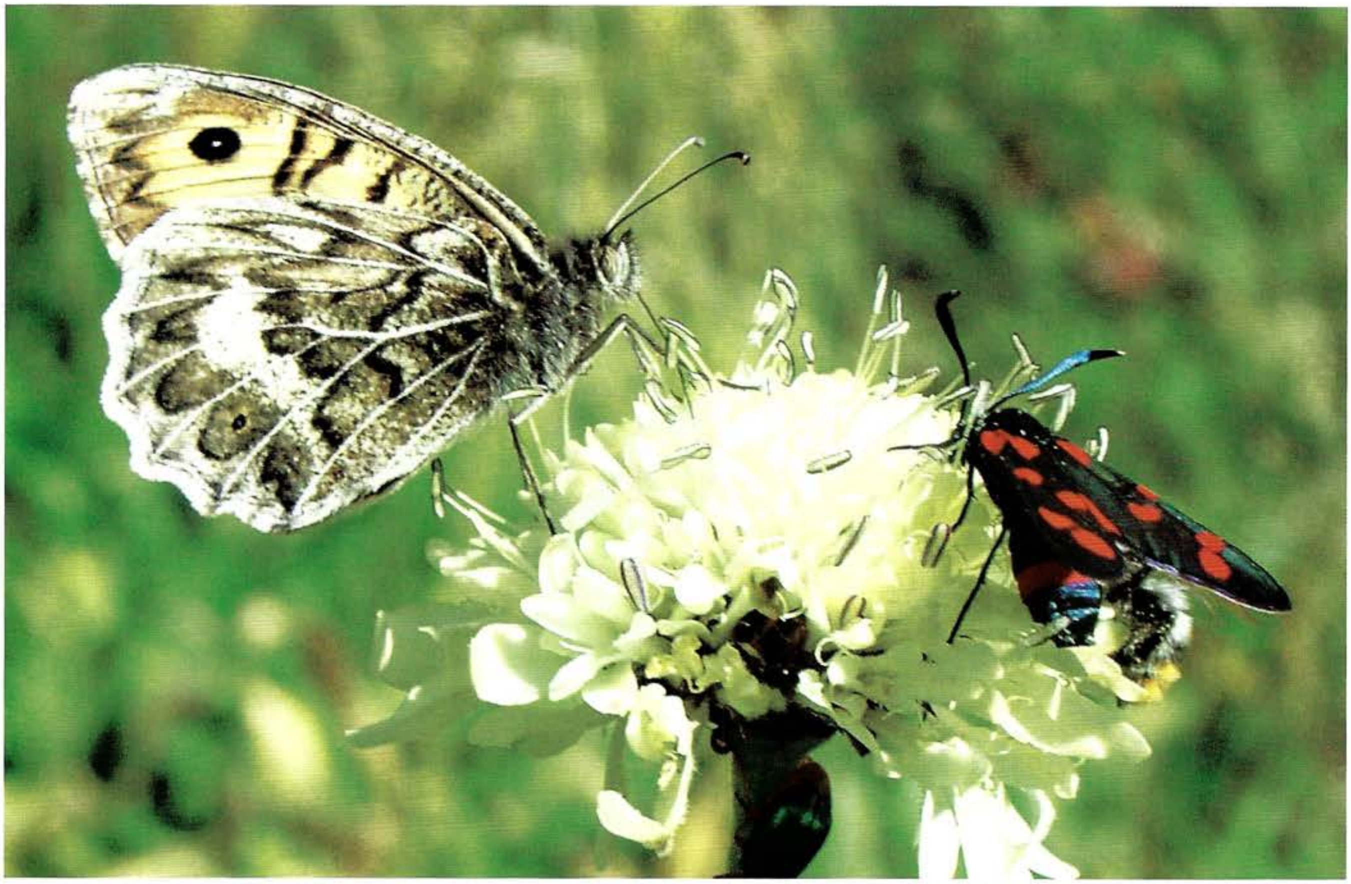
Iranian Argus (Esperarge climene)



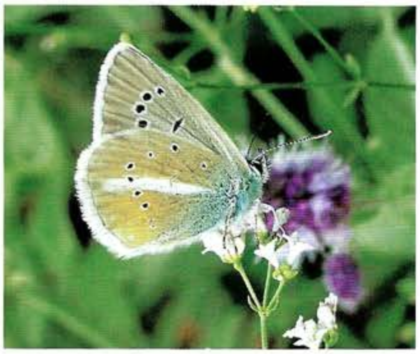
A pair of False Chalk-hill Blues (Polyommatus corydonius)



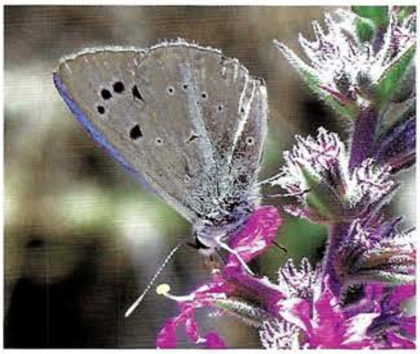
Turkish Fiery Copper (Lycaena ochimus)



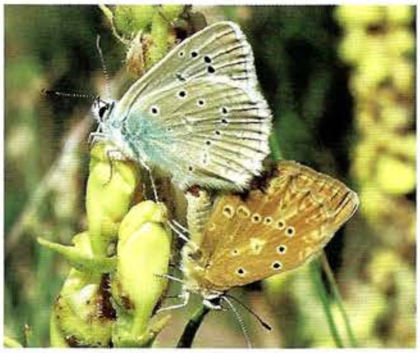
Grey Asian Grayling (Pseudochazara geyeri) *and a burnet moth*



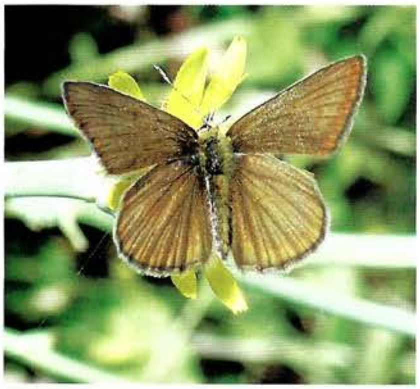
Damon Blue (Polyommatus damon)



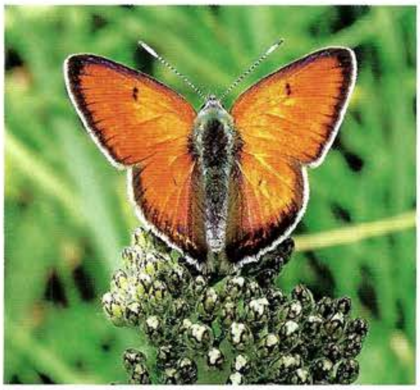
Hi Blue (Polyommatus merhaba)



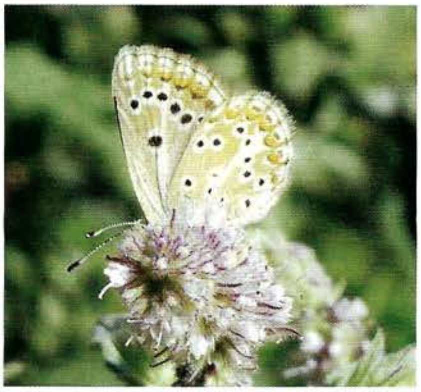
Meleager's Blue (Polyommatus daphnis)



Ripart's Anomalous Blue (Polyommatus ripartii)

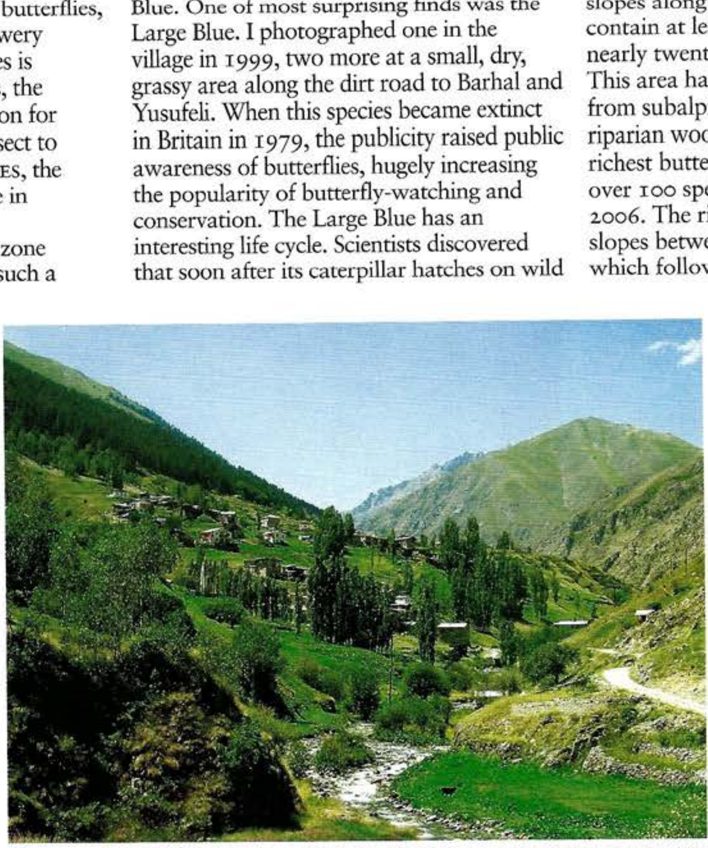


Balkan Copper (Lycaena candens)



Georgian False Argus (Plebeius teberdinus)

Geranium Argus. I was captivated by the Apollo, one of Eurasia's showiest butterflies, which gracefully patrolled the flowery hillsides. In many areas this species is extinct: in addition to habitat loss, the biggest threat has been its collection for trade, despite its being the first insect to come under the protection of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.



THE VILLAGE OF YAYLALAR, HOME TO AT LEAST 130 BUTTERFLY SPECIES

Nowhere else in the temperate zone had I seen so many butterflies in such a small area: not in the great wildernesses of the American West, the Canadian Rockies or the Swiss Alps. On my first visit, in 1999, in one week and within an area of two square kilometres, I saw over 100 of the roughly 375 species found in Turkey. If you consider that barely sixty species have ever been recorded in the UK, that just over 700 are found in the US and Canada combined, and that Europe has under 500 regularly occurring species, you see how special Yaylalar is.

After that trip I determined to return as often as possible and produce a photographic field guide. No such guide to Turkey's butterflies was then available; even the most comprehensive European guides were inadequate in the field. After nine more trips, in October 2007, the English version of the field guide was published, followed by an expanded Turkish version in May 2008.

I visited Yaylalar and the Çoruh Valley again in 2003 and 2006. The coniferous woodland margins and lush alpine and subalpine meadows around Yaylalar, the dry and stony banks of the Çoruh River between Yusufeli and Ispir, and the flowery slopes along the main road from Ispir north to Çayırözü host 60 to 70 per cent of all the species found in Turkey. This northeastern corner of Turkey is also home to a number of Turkish endemics, some rare and local, and several critically threatened in Europe.

Over three visits I have recorded some 130 species (just over a third of Turkey's butterfly species) in Yaylalar alone. As well as large numbers of Apollo, I have observed other endangered species such as the Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, endemics like the Turkish Blue, and northeastern specialities like the Caucasian Clouded Yellow. I was lucky enough to document the first ever Georgian Tawny Rockbrown in Turkey in 1999, when I photographed two near the village.

On the village's south side a narrow trail along the forest margin led to a valley where I found a healthy colony of the rare Eros Blue. One of most surprising finds was the Large Blue. I photographed one in the village in 1999, two more at a small, dry, grassy area along the dirt road to Barhal and Yusufeli. When this species became extinct in Britain in 1979, the publicity raised public awareness of butterflies, hugely increasing the popularity of butterfly-watching and conservation. The Large Blue has an interesting life cycle. Scientists discovered that soon after its caterpillar hatches on wild thyme buds, ants carry it to their nests. Here, protected from parasites and predators, the caterpillar feeds on ant larvae for about ten months before pupating and emerging as an adult butterfly. In exchange for protection and food, the ants feed on the caterpillar's sweet secretions. The Large Blue's decline, it seemed, was due to declining ant numbers. A sharp decline in sheep numbers and the disappearance of rabbits in the countryside from myxomatosis left grasslands too tall, shady and cool for the ant. All in all, a perfect example of an ecosystem.

Just as the higher mountain climate, coniferous forests and alpine and subalpine grasslands of Yaylalar account for the presence of many species characteristic of a Euro-Siberian biome, nearby Yusufeli's hot, dry summers, stony valleys and lower altitude explain why it is home to so many species typical of the Mediterranean biome. A short walk in any direction produces Little Tiger Blue, Southern White Admiral and the threatened Poseidon Blue. The exciting White-banded Grayling and exotics like the Turkish Fiery Copper populate the flowery roadsides around the town, as well as the Hi Blue, a Çoruh endemic. In recent years, a field worker studying brown bears here noted colonies of the endangered Checkered Blue.

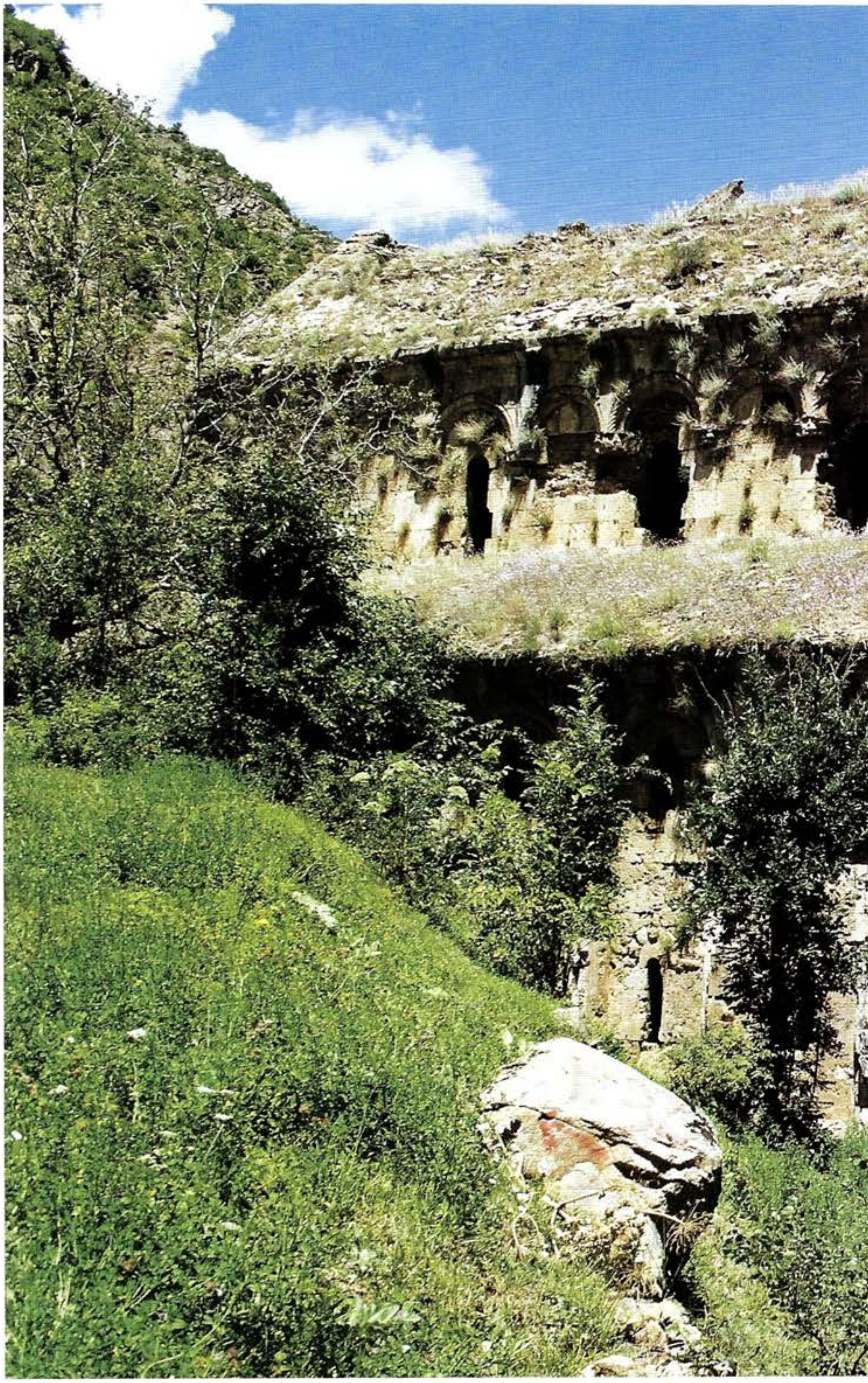
Further west along the Çoruh River, the slopes along the Ispir-Çayırözü road contain at least 160 species, including nearly twenty endemic and forty rare taxa. This area has a great diversity of habitats, from subalpine grasslands at 2500m to riparian woodlands at 1100m, and is the richest butterfly site in Turkey. I recorded over 100 species there in two days in July 2006. The richly vegetated roadsides and slopes between Çayırözü and Özlüce, which follow a stream (at 1600–1900m), are especially productive for higher-altitude species like Rebel's Hairstreak and Alpine Ringlet. Blues are everywhere, with the False Chalk-hill Blue especially conspicuous. There are several species of ringlets, tawny rockbrowns and graylings. This area may hold the largest populations of Gray Asian Grayling and Iranian Argus in Turkey, and may be the easiest place to find the striking Ionian Emperor. My most exciting find was several Georgian False Argus, found only between Özlüce and Ispir in Turkey. This tiny butterfly has a distinctive white stripe in the middle of the underside of its hind wing. It belongs to the group known as "blues", though both sexes have brown wings (generally males have blue wings, females brown).

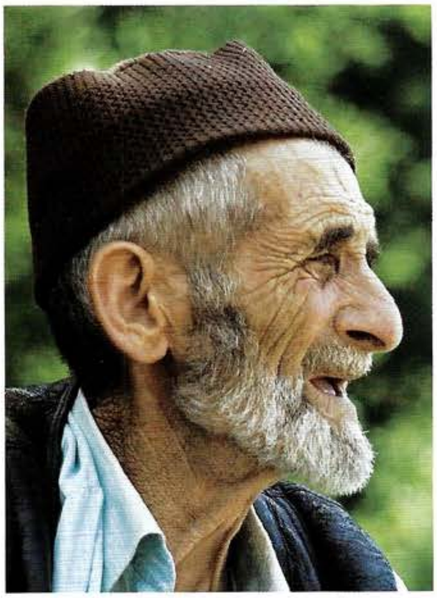
One rewarding by-product of my travels in Turkey was as memorable as my discoveries of rare species: the personal interactions with villagers, farmers, shepherds, mayors and, above all, children. During my last visit to Yaylalar in 2006, one young boy puzzled over my travelling thousands of miles just to watch butterflies. He asked repeatedly if I collected butterflies for sale; did I sell my photographs? I insisted butterfly-watching was my hobby, that I enjoyed watching butterflies for a variety of reasons, from connecting with nature and aesthetic appreciation to stimulating travel. I added that observing floating patches of tiny blue butterflies in a mountain meadow was an end in itself, making all my efforts more than worthwhile. Satisfied with my explanation, he offered to take me to a spot he knew of, a stream with "many blue and orange butterflies with black spots". I saw in him at once both my own childhood and the future of my village. ◆

Ahmet Baytaş is professor of economics at Montclair State University and author of A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Turkey, *available to* CORNUCOPIA *subscribers post-free at £15.95*

HIGH IN THE APPARENTLY EMPTY KAÇKARS, THE WAY OF LIFE IS AS OLD AS THE HILLS. MICHAEL HORNSBY JOINS IN THE FUN AT A VILLAGE FESTIVAL IN REMOTE SUMMER PASTURES.
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY GIULIO RUBINO

WRESTLING WITH LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS





I arrived in the Kaçkar Mountains, in the northeastern corner of Turkey, expecting to find an untouched, empty wilderness. This misconception faded quickly as I caught sight of ruined chapels and castles perched on inaccessible rocky piers high above the road, then small clusters of houses on the mountainsides. Outside the few modern villages, view after view showed alpine terrain crisscrossed by faint paths along which

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PICTURE: THE 10TH-CENTURY MONASTERY OF THE 'FOUR CHURCHES', DÖRT KILISE, NEAR THE VILLAGE OF TEKKALE IN THE ÇORUH VALLEY; THE ELEGANT VAULTING OF THE MAIN CHURCH'S BASILICA-PLAN INTERIOR; TREKKING THE APPROACH TO THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT KAÇKAR; A LOCAL MAN CASTS AN EYE OVER PROCEEDINGS AT THE ÇEVRELI YAYLA FESTIVAL

mules and camels used to carry goods between Erzurum and the Black Sea. Further exploration revealed that the thick carpets of vegetation on the valley floors were often orchards and gardens concealing houses and the occasional massive Georgian church.

Far from being sleepy and deserted, the mountain pastures of Çevreli Yayla are a place of heightened activity today. This is the time of the local summer festival, and we are promised music, dancing and even wrestling. But first, sitting cross-legged on the floor of a yayla house, high in the formidable Kaçkar mountain range, I'm treated to a feast. All the food comes from within five miles. In front of me are dry-cured olives that were grown in the valley below, on trees next to vines for the dolma, whose rice shines a luminous green in paddy fields drenched by the Çoruh River's waters. Apples bulge out of plastic bags and lie scattered around.

ABOVE AND TOP: AT ÇEVRELI YAYLA'S FESTIVAL – A SUMMER CELEBRATION IN THE HIGH PASTURES – AS THE MUSIC FROM A 'TULUM', A TURKISH BAGPIPE, GAINS MOMENTUM, DANCERS APPEAR, LINK FINGERS AND FORM A CIRCLE TO PERFORM THE 'HORON'

Their trees kept the fierce summer sun off the cucumbers, tomatoes and onions that have been chopped together into a fragrant salad. The lamb *döner* once grazed the nearby hillside. The yoghurt sauce carries a hint of wild flowers in high pastures, the same ones that the bees used to make the honey for the dense, sticky cakes. I'm told that later I can see the lake where the tiny salty trout were caught. Only the tea comes from the Black Sea coast, 40 kilometres away.

Four generations of one family fire questions at me, curious perhaps that I've dropped in on this, their summer festival. The local accent would be largely indecipherable but for a formula to the conversation, and I wing it on probability: "21 years"; "yes, I study"; "no, I'm not married". A hand-on-heart *ma'şallah* brings the house down.

The house, built by a grandfather's father, is heartbreakingly wonderful in its stark comfort. It lies abandoned during the harsh winter months and contains nothing integral to it but stone and wood. Nothing inside can't be packed up and put on the back of a mule, or a Volvo. A cloth is draped over our legs under the low table in order to keep food and feet apart. Another is hung from the ceiling to separate living and sleeping areas; another is the door to the outside world and the festival ground.

I was in the Kaçkars primarily to trek with Kate Clow, creator of Turkey's first waymarked walks, and to assist on her project with TEMA, a Turkish NGO specialising in reforestation which was aiming, among other things, to develop sustainable tourism and document the extraordinary profusion of butterflies.

Full of the local culinary delights, and somewhat overwhelmed by my hosts' observation of silence at a reading of the *fatiha* over the yayla mosque's loudspeaker, I walked with some of the local lads of my age down the steep bank to the festival arena. It is set in a natural amphitheatre open on one side to a spectacular view across the jagged peaks of the lower Kaçkars. My work with Kate had made me acutely aware of the social and environmental problems in the region: dramatic depopulation in the past 30 years; disappearing amenities and services; unreliable numbers of tourists; the looming shadow of the long-proposed Yusufeli Dam. Festivals such as this at Çevreli were first conceived in the 1990s to counter such threats, and give a much-needed boost to morale and the local economy. My guides, dressed in torn jeans and black T-shirts emblazoned with the names of American rock groups, weren't concerned with all that and seemed to sneer at the culture they had been brought up in, while simultaneously beaming with pride that an outsider should take an interest. Around us, though, there were others more dedicated to preserving the yayla way of life. I was told that in the past, when the

LEFT AND ABOVE: IN THE 'KARAKUCAK', OR 'DARK EMBRACE', BOYS GRAPPLE, TWIST AND FIGHT TO PIN AN OPPONENT'S SHOULDERS TO THE GROUND. A RED RIBBON TIED ROUND AN ANKLE (RIGHT) HELPS THE REFEREE IDENTIFY WHOSE LIMBS ARE WHOSE

yaylas were full of people all summer, all this picnicking, dancing, singing and wrestling wasn't packed into a weekend: it was a way of life, which the festival seeks to recapture.

From the makeshift stage a tune was being played on the *tulum*, a Turkish bagpipe. Protected to the south by mountains, the locals here have always preserved a unique identity, outlasting the trends sweeping through the rest of the great peninsula. Suddenly the music gained momentum and a line of dancers appeared spontaneously, linked by their little fingers and skip-hopping their way into a circle.

The dance, called *horon tepmek* here in the northeast and *halay çekmek* elsewhere, is nothing if not democratic. It allows for the most outrageous show-boating and timorousness all at once. The leader waves his free hand in the air, sometimes embellishing his actions with a handkerchief, and drops to the ground, kicking out his legs with expert poise and rhythm. Behind him – and it is nearly always a him – everyone arranges themselves according to how well they do in comparison. Without any apparent direction, whole new circles form themselves according to levels of skill, so that no one, except perhaps a self-conscious traveller, need be embarrassed by their neighbour's greater proficiency.

A singing competition was equally good-natured – and produced an equal variety of talent – but a definite sense of competition became evident when the arena was cleared for the wrestling, *karakucak*, literally "the dark embrace", which sounds more ominous than it actually is. Deeply rooted in a pastoral society, in which it makes no sense at all for the healthiest and fittest men to beat each other senseless, it resembles a formalised yet spectacular game of rough and tumble. The middleweights hurl, twist, pull and grapple with Olympian athleticism, desperately trying to get their opponents' shoulders on the ground. Boys as young as five or six take part, and I've never before witnessed the held breath of maternal concern on such a collective scale as when one young man at Çevreli took an accidental blow to one eye.

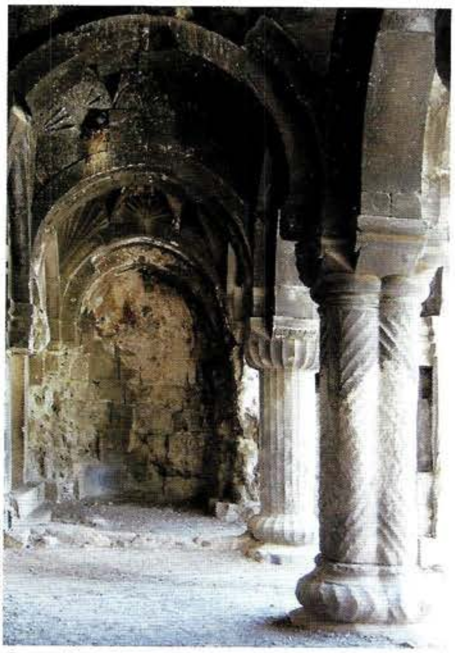
The wrestlers start locked together and low, like two rutting rams. Indeed, the pre-match ceremony involves a remarkably goat-like prance, and a gesture not unlike grazing. In the early summer here, bulls are pitted against each other as a spectator sport, so that once out to pasture they don't push each other off cliffs while vying for dominance. The comparison was unavoidable, and I wondered which came first. ◆

TRAVEL NOTES

The main entry point for the Kaçkars is the town of Yusufeli, a three-hour drive from Erzurum. Most *pansiyons* operate their own *dolmuş* service to take guests further up the valleys. Festivals are best reached by privately arranged transport or hitching. With whole villages making the journey at a time, finding a lift is rarely a problem.

GORGEOUS GEORGIAN

ROBERT OUSTERHOUT IS AGOG AT THE REMARKABLE GEORGIAN CHURCHES OF THE TAO-KLARJETI, THE TWO MEDIEVAL GEORGIAN PRINCIPALITIES BETWEEN KARS AND THE KAÇKARS


ROBERT OUSTERHOUT

OSHKI'S DRAMATIC SOUTHWEST PORTICO

Could you get out of the car?" Yücel politely requested. We were halfway up the mountain on the roughest, narrowest, and at this point steepest, road I'd witnessed this side of Albania. The view from the passenger window was straight down into the river valley several hundred metres below. I reluctantly unfastened my seatbelt. "Not you," he clarified. "Only those in the back seat." Perhaps a change in the weight distribution would encourage the front-wheel-drive to grip the roadway, which to my discerning eye had become no more than a goat path – a mountain-goat path. Nino and Maria quickly abandoned ship. I reluctantly stayed put. We shuddered and shook, wheels spun, I clutched the armrest as the view through the window became increasingly dramatic.

It didn't work. "Perhaps we can walk from here?" I offered feebly. But Yücel took a driver's pride in delivering us to the doorstep, and we were still a few kilometres short of our destination, a ruined Georgian monastery high in the mountains of the Tao-Klarjeti. Eventually I was ordered out of the car so that emergency measures could be put into effect.

"This should work," Yücel calmly forecast as he turned the car round and proceeded to drive up the incline in reverse. With the front-wheel-drive pushing, rather than pulling, it did indeed work. We watched incredulously as the car disappeared round the corner, then we hastened after it. As the road levelled, Yücel allowed us back in and we bounced on our way until the road petered out.

Our reward, after an additional 20 minutes of hiking, was a perfectly spectacular ruined monastery, known as Porta/Pırnaltı, or Khandzta in medieval times, dominated by a late-medieval church whose lavish dome still rises dramatically above a skeleton of broken vaults.

The Tao-Klarjeti is named after the two most important medieval Georgian principalities, bounded by the Pontic Mountains (the Kaçkars) to the west, by the Erzurum plain to the south and by the plain of Kars to the east. Tao had a centre at Tortum, Klarjeti at Ardanuç.

For reasons unexplained, the medieval Georgians preferred their monasteries in high, rugged, out-of-the-way places, which may be why they get so few tourists today. Most visitors – foreign and Turkish – come for trekking or kayaking and have no idea what they're missing. "Blessed Grigor suffered many hardships transporting building materials to the monastery," our Georgian travelling companion, Nino, elucidated. We believed her. Just getting there seemed hard enough.

Nino, a native of Georgia, helped us keep everything in its proper (ie Georgian) perspective, although we occasionally experienced memorable moments of confusion. The day before she had regaled us with the tales of the Holy Kitten, one of medieval Georgia's most sacred relics.

"The kitten?" I asked.

"Yes, the Holy Kitten of Christ." I did not remember any mention of cats in the Bible, let alone sanctified felines.

"You mean a small cat?" asked Maria.

"No, his coat!" She remained unruffled by our outburst of laughter.

"His chiton," I clarified. "In English it's pronounced *kigh-ton*." My Turkish failed me as I tried to explain our fit of humour to the driver.

"Uh-huh," Yücel responded and kept on driving.

Chitons and kittens aside, Georgian medieval history is nothing if not confusing, with boundaries and political allegiances changing on an almost daily basis. Through

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THE SOUND OF TRANCE

CATERINA SCARAMELLI ON THE BLACK SEA FOLK-MUSIC REVIVAL

In the Kaçkars, sounds flow with the rivers, through the valleys, fragmented by echo, softened by the fog. I cannot recall a night unaccompanied by the melodies of a stream, of a song played far away, carried on the breeze. In villages I have spent many an evening trying to follow the combined rhythms of the *horon* in my heavy, muddy boots. The music played from the Black Sea shore to the highest mountain passes is notably distinct from that of other regions of Anatolia. Here Pontic Greeks, Laz, Hemşin, Armenian and Turkish have together created a musical tradition rich in repertoires, themes and languages.

It is a gritty monophonic music, bouncing on asymmetrical metres and woven around diatonic scales, yet at times suggestive of a Renaissance or medieval carol. Its trance-inducing monotony pulses with the rhythms of work. It accompanies the shepherds up to the yayla, descends to the record companies in the cities, resonates in half-empty villages and explodes at crowded festivals.

Musicians perform with the piercing *tulum*, a goatskin bagpipe, the *kemençe*, a string instrument carved from a single piece of wood, held vertically and often played standing up, and with the *kaval*, a soft-sounding, simple wooden flute. The voice is no less important, and a large repertoire is sung *a cappella*.

Ayşenur Kolivar's acute, vigorous voice appears in many of the new recordings now available. When we met in a café in the Istanbul suburb of Kadıköy, she had just returned from the Black Sea Mountains, where her band of musicians, Grup Helesa (as in Greek *thalassa*, the sea), had been learning villagers' songs and, with their help, composing new ones for an album due out in the autumn.

lazeburi
documentary of Authentic Laz Music

aravani
Birol Topaloğlu

Improvisation is central, she explained. A song might suddenly spring from a line of conversation. The lyrics of old ballads vary greatly from village to village, and melodies are stretched to fit different rhythms. There are collective work songs (*heyamo*), such as *Nçaisi Birapa* (Tea Song): "We are picking tea, us girls/ boys take the bags filled with tea." Rest songs tend to express an individual's feelings. *Aravani*, for example, reflects an old crippled shepherd's longing for his yayla: "The waters of Aravani, it all, the unifying force in Georgian culture was the church, which grew wealthy, I suspect, by default. Thus, although the mountaintops of the Tao-Klarjeti are punctuated with fortresses and castles, the most memorable remains are the churches, which are as breathtaking as the landscape. Many are royal or aristocratic foundations; some did double duty as cathedrals and mausolea; most are difficult of access, but all of them are eye-opening, mind-boggling and definitely worth the trip. The common denominators are tall proportions, exquisite ashlar construction, innovative vaulting and exceptional decoration in relief sculpture and fresco. Trust me – after the Tao-Klarjeti, Seljuk architecture will never look the same again.

Nor will European medieval architecture. The Tao-Klarjeti churches seem more Romanesque than Byzantine, but they predate their French counterparts by at least a century.

"This must be where Romanesque came from," Maria commented as we stumbled into the nave of Dört Kilise. There was a wink-wink in her voice, however, for we were both familiar with Josef Strzygowski's wild speculations, written a century ago when he first discovered Caucasian architecture. Although we could quibble over the details, it was hard to deny the monumental grandeur. Nothing surviving from Constantinople is quite so big, so grand, so well constructed.

To see the monuments, it is possible to visit the major sites from a base in Yusufeli, but you will need a good car and (most important) a stalwart driver. Porta was the only place where a four-wheel-drive vehicle or reverse driving seemed necessary, but the roads can be challenging and the views distracting. For a long weekend, I'd recommend the churches listed on the right.

Öşk Vank/Oshki is the grandest of them all, a monumental domed basilica, built c 963–73 by David the Great and his brother Bagrat. Lavishly decorated with exterior sculpture; the founders are depicted presenting the church at the southeast corner. The southwest portico is also a marvel of weird vaulting forms and an explosion of carved decoration, with angels in the architecture and what might just be the Holy Column of St Nino.

İşhan/Ishkani ranks a close second and is slightly later in date, completed c 1032. Similarly, a monumental domed basilica of fine ashlar construction, resplendent with relief sculpture. The builders here delighted in variety. And I mean variety – I dare you to find anything symmetrical in the building or its decoration. The western nave, still walled off, once functioned as a mosque, while to the east the dome preserves a painted *Exaltation of the Cross*, dramatically set against a background of lapis lazuli.

Haho/Khakhuli, also founded by David the Great, was the centrepiece of one of Georgia's most famous monasteries. Smaller than the previous examples, with less sculpture, it now serves as a mosque. The painted cross in the dome, also set against a background of lapis lazuli, makes tracking down the key worth the effort.

Dört Kilise, built in the time of David the Great, is really "the church of the four [holy men]", as opposed to "four churches", which is what the name suggests. A grand, three-aisled basilica, it lacks both the dome and the sculpture of the previous examples but impresses by its austere monumentality and magnificent, pristine setting. The church was imitated slightly later at Barhal, which has more sculpture, less setting, and is now a mosque.

Cevizli/Tbeti lies further away, near the village of Şavşat, but is worth the drive. As one approaches, the landscape becomes verdant, with pine trees, meadows, haystacks and wooden architecture reminiscent of Switzerland. The church, once cruciform and domed, is now a picturesque ruin of melancholy beauty. I was transfixed. As Nino tried to explain its very complicated construction history, I wandered off into the fallen debris, trying to make sense of it. The Tao-Klarjeti is full of surprises. Amid the litter, I stumbled upon a litter of kittens.

The Chiton, for those interested, is preserved in Mtskheta Cathedral in Georgia and requires a separate trip. The feast day is October 1.

Articles on the Black Sea CORNUCOPIA 12 includes İşhan and the Çoruh, a fine Çamlıhemşin konak, Trabzon in the Second World War, and Istanbul's "Little Georgia". CORNUCOPIA 28 visits Georgia itself and walks the high Kaçkars. CORNUCOPIA 34 devotes 40 pages to Black Sea country houses. ◆

ROBERT OUSTERHOUT

THE SOUTH FAÇADE OF MONUMENTAL OSHKI

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are they still so cold? The places where I have been, do they
still keep my footsteps?"

Mourning songs are sung by women only, as are lullabies, while both genders are involved in lengthy improvisation "duels". The fast, entertaining *horon* accompanies circles of coordinated dancers. This dance has distinct male and female styles; the dancers might sing three or four lines, which are then repeated. The *destane*, on the other hand, can continue for hours. The narrator of this epic, *kemençe* on his knee, enchants the audience with thrilling legends of war, love, exile, imprisonment…

In the past decade Black Sea folk-music recordings have mushroomed. "The audience used to get very bored during our performances – they would whistle or leave," Ayşenur recalls. "One year, suddenly everyone was cheering us." Now each town's municipal festival, falling on a weekend in July or August, features well-known artists and offers a platform for local young folk-rock bands. There is also a growing interest in non-amplified folk music, informed by research, yet distant from the stale sounds of the archive.

The first albums to include songs in Laz and Hemşin were produced only in the late 1990s. Laz, a southwest Caucasian language, can be heard on the coast between Rize and Hopa. Hemşin is closer to Armenian and is confined to Hopa's mountainous hinterland. Today's performers are not always familiar with these languages, once widely diffused in the region, but are learning from older generations.

Vova, by Hikmet Akçiçek and Mustafa Biber, came out in 2005 (on the Ada label) and was the first album devoted to Hemşin music, though some songs are also in Turkish, a reminder of continuous musical exchanges. It features moving melodies from *kaval*, *kemençe* and *tulum*, accompanied by guitar, oboe and deep, suggestive percussion.

As for Laz music, the main performer and researcher on the scene is Birol Topalaoğlu. His **Lazeburi** (Kalan Music) is an extensive musical anthology of Laz *destane* (epics) in two CDs. Some of the songs he performs himself on the *tulum*, and others are old recordings by other Black Sea artists. **Aravani** (also from Kalan), in both Laz and Turkish, collects work songs, lullabies and *horon*.

Grup Helesa's album will not be limited to any one oral tradition, but will be a multilingual exploration of the Black Sea women's repertoire.

Finally, there is **Maçahela**, a recording of Georgian songs by twelve octogenarian men from villages in the valley of the same name. This is no ordinary valley. Besides its awe-inspiring beauty, deserving of an entire issue of CORNUCOPIA to itself, it is cut off from Turkey by snow for five months of the year, and for most of the 20th century was cut off from its other Georgian half by the Iron Curtain. Only song could float across the border, to bind separated families together. ◆

By whatever name it is known – whether Karataş Yayla (Black Rock Pasture) or Çağrankaya (Singing Rock) – this spur of the Kaçkars is full of drama. Andrew Byfield battled rain and fog to reach its riches

A DAY ON BLACK ROCK PASTURE

Temptation simply got the better of me. I was heading south on the road from Of to İspir with a party of nature-lovers. Along with Kate Clow, my role was that of co-leader of the party, and our notes from Greentours HQ instructed us to head up towards the Ovit Pass in search of blackcock and salamanders – not an overly exciting prospect for a botanist! But as we approached the village of İkizdere our minibus passed the turning for Çağrankaya Yayla, or Karataş Yayla, as it used to be known. Now, I have magical memories of this elevated summer settlement: of its flowers, its landscapes and its weather. Memories – before monumental rainstorms drove me off the mountain, bringing countless mudslides slurping down onto the roads below – of finding small peat bogs with clubmosses and sundews new to Turkey. Momentary glimpses – before fog blanketed my every view – of a vast plateau of glassy, squid-ink-black obsidian, covered in powder-blue "garden" scabious. And of the low, leafy domes of Orphanides' rhododendron, *Epigaea gaultherioides*, tantalisingly in neither flower nor seed.

Out of flower, Orphanides' rhododendron is anything but attractive: its evergreen leaves are leathery and bristle with hairs like those of an irregularly shaved leg. And

Photographs by Andrew Byfield

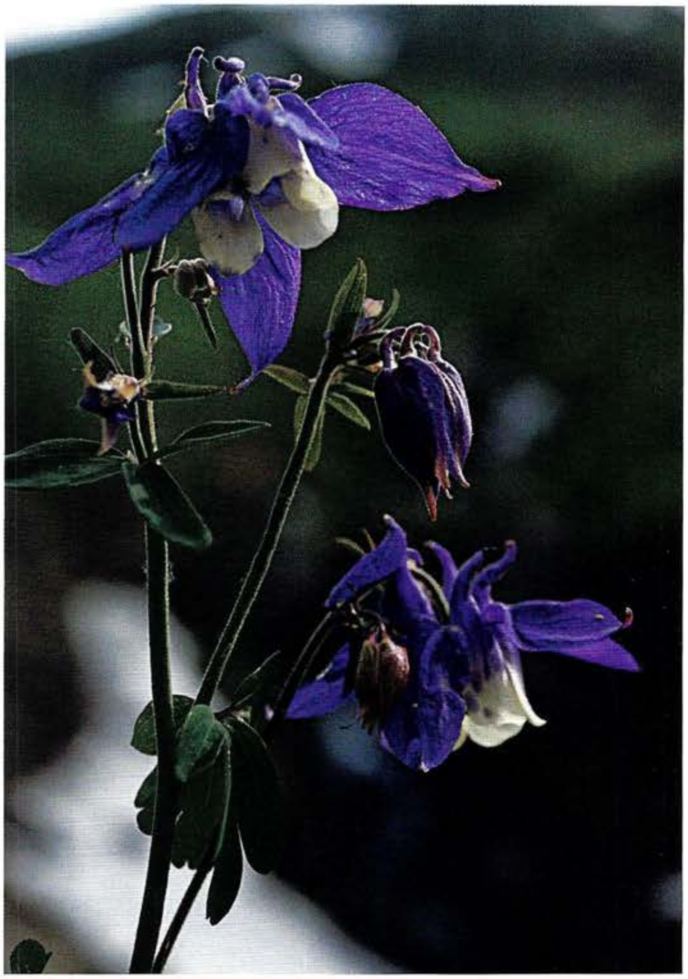
Left: low-growing 'Rhododendron caucasicum', the most common moorland rhododendron in the Pontic Alps. Above: fog wells up over the Kaçkars sitting as it does, under snow for four or five months of the year, the whole bush takes on a rather tired look. Yet the plant boasts a near-legendary status amongst alpine gardeners – grown by few and high on the list of desiderata for many. Fewer still have seen the plant in flower in the wild, for it grows high in the moorland zone of the Pontic Alps, blossoming in late spring when so many of the elevated roads and trackways have yet to be cleared of winter snow or rock.

At the time of our visit – in late May 2008 – the weather had been atypically dry for a few weeks, enough for the smaller roads to have been cleared and reopened early. Could we make it to the yayla in a minibus? Would the weather be kind to us? With no guarantee of success – and after much discussion – I persuaded my group to forgo bears, birds and amphibians in order to embark on a wild goose chase up to the Black Rock Pasture.

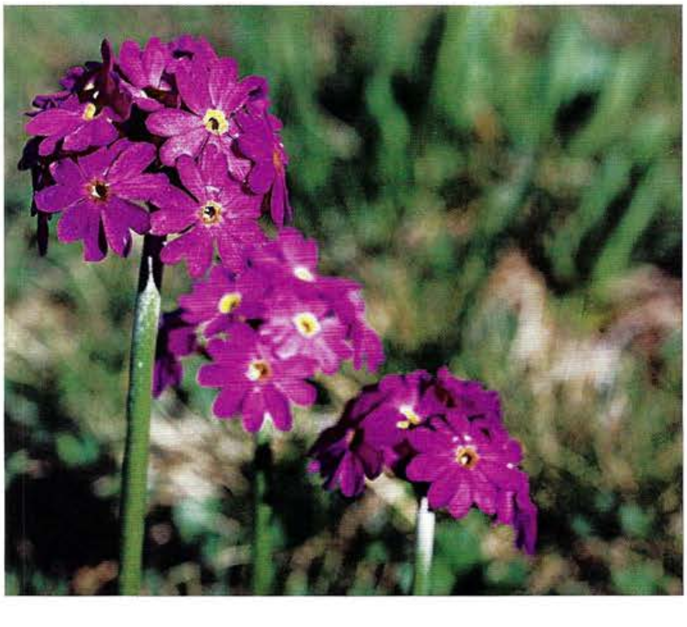
Most of the mountain tracks in the Pontic Alps gradually gain height by following churning streams and rivers deep in the valleys. Not so the Çağrankaya road. In a multitude of zigs and zags it slices its way steeply up the mountainside, soon leaving the valley bottom and reaching the moorland above. Fortunately the previous day's adventures had habituated our group to the thrills and potential spills of narrow, unsurfaced roads, with their vertiginous drops, so all eyes were on the views that unfurled as we rose in height. These were monumental in scale, epic in absolutely every way. Due to the rapid rise in elevation, the vegetation morphs rapidly, providing ever-changing interest for the flower-lover. Monumental beech forest – effectively temperate rainforest – gives way to a mixed woodland liberally punctuated by the dark, evergreen columns of eastern spruce and Nordmann's fir (the latter a popular Christmas tree variety). Occasional clumps of the rare primrose *Primula megasaefolia*, with perfectly circular leaves like those of a garden elephant's ears (*Megasaea* is the old name for *Bergenia*), were sadly well over. But the rich blue flowers of the perennial forget-me-not *Omphalodes cappadocica* still lingered here and there. It is very much a colourful speciality of these mountains, and has never set foot in Cappadocia, despite its name.

In the scrub zone between woodland and open moorland, I succumbed to the temptation of the know-it-all botanist by testing the group on the identity of a sweet chestnut lookalike. And, yes, they fell for it: I was able smugly to point out their collective stupidity by revealing its true identity: we were observing the threatened Pontic oak, *Quercus pontica* – anything but rare on these slopes.

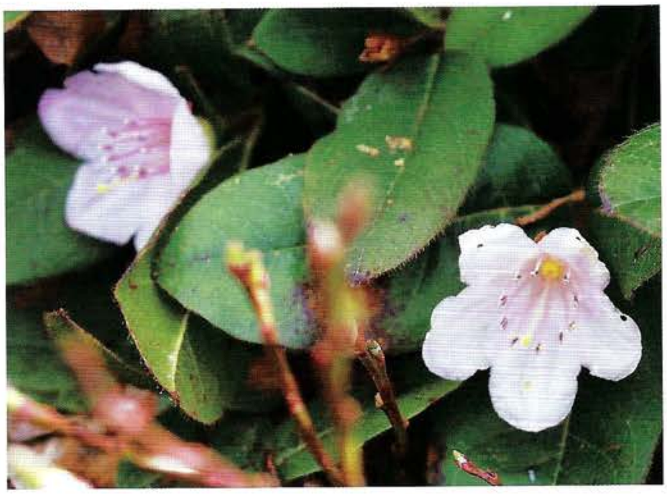
But it was the moorland zone that made this escapade so worthwhile for the group, for here the geology changes abruptly. Imagine a *millefeuille* – the moorland zone lies on a relatively thin, flat and hard "pastry" of igneous basalts, creating the flat plateau on which the summer settlement of Cağrankaya Yayla lies. This protects a softer "custard" of weathering granite below. Granite has a low fertility, so is bad for plants, but the basalt is altogether richer, both in minerals and botanical diversity.



ABOVE: 'AQUILEGIA OLYMPICA', THE ONLY NATIVE COLUMBINE, FLOWERS IN SUMMER. BELOW: THE TURKISH DRUMSTICK PRIMROSE, 'PRIMULA AURICULATA', BLOOMS FROM MAY IN PEATY MEADOWS. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: ANOTHER SUMMER FLOWER, THE BEAUTIFUL 'LILIUM CARNIOLICUM' SSP. 'PONTICUM' IS FAIRLY COMMON IN SCRUB BETWEEN FOREST AND MOORLAND; THE WORLD'S SMALLEST SOWBREAD, 'CYCLAMEN PARVIFLORUM' SSP. 'PARVIFLORUM' IS ENDEMIC TO THE KAÇKARS' MONTANE TURF AND APPEARS FROM MAY ONWARDS



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW BYFIELD



Photographs by Andrew Byfield and Val Lee

Opposite from top: summer-flowering 'Scutellaria pontica' thrives on the basalt rocks; the perennial forget-me-not 'Omphalodes cappadocica', now widely grown in Europe, blooms in Spring. This page, from top: another spring flower, 'Caltha polypetala', associated with montane streams; the pink spring flowers of the near-legendary Orphanides' rhododendron, 'Epigaea gaultherioides'; the evergreen fir clubmoss 'Huperzia selago', whose spores are collected in large quantities for use in condom manufacture

The landscape here is a classic "in-by", "out-by" one, typical of mountain settlements across Europe. A central cluster of log houses is surrounded by small fields, each enclosed by a stone wall – the "infields" protected from grazing and used for hay and vegetable production. A series of narrow alleyways and droving roads laces through these fields, giving access for man and stock to the open, unenclosed moorlands beyond – the "outfield" commonland for the villagers' collective summer grazing. We lunched on the short, winter-seared turf of these communal pastures, with a scatter of squills, kingcup and stars of Bethlehem in the wetter areas nearby. One speciality – the world's smallest cyclamen, *Cyclamen parviflorum* – was in early flower, though still only now bursting into summer life. But all eyes were on the panorama that encircled us. Looking at the map later I realised that the Çağrankaya plateau represents perhaps the largest and most elevated spur of mountains that lurch north from the main Kaçkar ridge. While a mantle of cloud gently billowed up the valley below, the weather had indeed remained clement above and we were given a view fit for a sultan – the full length of the Kaçkars in all their sun-drenched glory.

The slopes of the plateaus facing south supported a richer flora. Here creamy-white *Rhododendron caucasicum* and the multi-headed *Anemone narcissiflora* clung to tor-like boulders, above meadows of the purple drumstick primrose *Primula auriculata*. Rare ferns such as the holly fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*) and alpine woodsia (*Woodsia alpina*) grew in a moonscape of black basalt gullies nearby – altogether more common here than in Britain, where the ravages of Victorian fern-collecting have reduced them to great rarity today. And, everywhere, the young shoots of lilies, columbines and cranesbills pierced the ground, giving promise of the fine displays of flowers to come.

I guess that in all accounts of hunts to rediscover fabled rarities, the prey is found in the final minutes as the hunters retrace their steps down the mountain. In our case it was altogether less onerous: Orphanides' rhododendron proved as abundant as I had remembered, growing with the abandon of heather on the sides of Scottish forestry tracks. The first flowers, nibbled by insects, were disappointing, but soon the party gazed in awe at mat after mat of *Epigaea* in full, glorious flower. And what a beautiful plant it is, with its large, apple-blossom-pink saucers liberally sprinkled over bristly mats of leaves.

As for the great black obsidian fell, I simply couldn't find it. But I am reminded of the wartime words of the great English gardener and writer Reginald Farrer: "Now the irises are blooming again at the Halls of Heaven. And when the guns are broken and silent once more, the irises will still go on blooming year by year." For myself, I know that the powder-blue scabiouses are still flowering up on Black Rock Pasture, and one day, when the roads are dry and the sun is shining, I may just possibly pass that hidden mountain road junction on my way south to İspir. ◆

Andrew Byfield travelled with Turkish Airlines (thy.com) and Green Tours (greentours.co.uk). For his Cornucopia *articles, cornucopia.net/byfield.html*

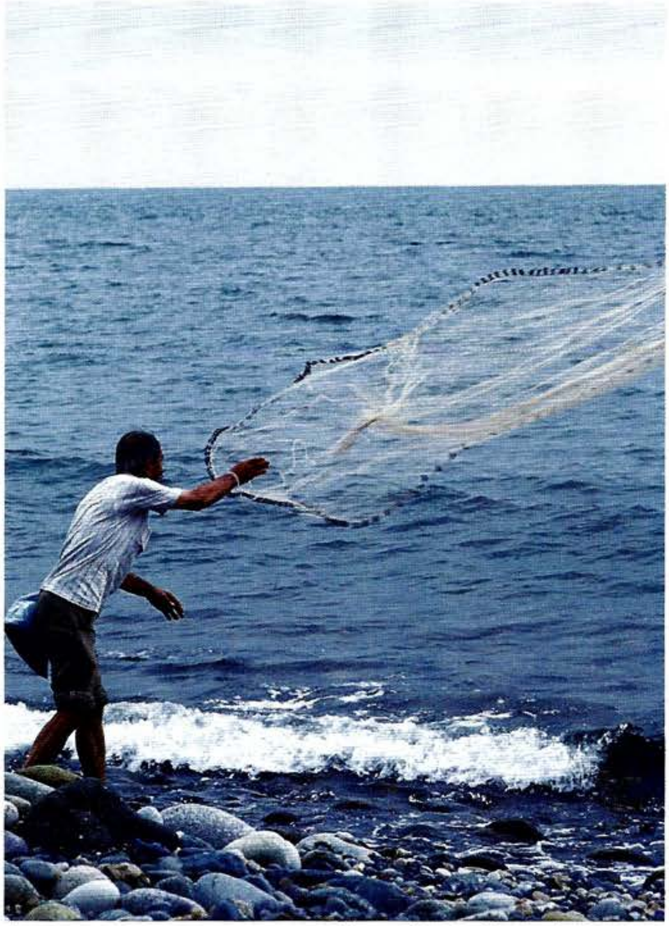
OFF THE EATEN TRACK

THE BEST OF THE BLACK STUFF

FROM BLACK FIGS TO ANCHOVY CORNBREAD, CHARLES PERRY DINES OUT ON THE SPECIALITIES OF THE BLACK SEA COAST

The Black Sea isn't quite black, but gunmetal grey would be a fair description, especially in cloudy weather – of which there's a lot at this rainy northern edge of Anatolia. The Black Sea people like black foods, too. There are *kara incir* (small black figs, exported to Germany as a "nostalgia food" for guest workers); *kara yemiş* (black fruit), the cherry laurel, known elsewhere in Turkey as *taflan*); and *kara üzüm* (black grapes), which seem to be an American slip-skin grape variety like Concord. Above all there is *kara lahana*, a rather weedy-looking variety of collard that you see growing by doorsteps all along the Black Sea coast. Locally it is often simply called *lahana*, which would mean cabbage anywhere else in Turkey. Though its smallish oval leaves are silvery-grey when fresh, they do turn blackish green in cooking. The earthy, slightly spicy flavor of *kara lahana* runs throughout the local cuisine – in soups and stews, in salads, in dolmas. They even like to wrap fish in the leaves before grilling them.

The climate around here is perfect for hazelnuts, but bad for a number of other crops, notably wheat, which is usually replaced by maize (a more accommodating if less versatile grain). When I had lunch in Maçka, up in the hills behind Trabzon, it was culture shock for an American. Sitting on the veranda of a log cabin, surrounded by pine trees dripping in light rain, I was feasting on bean soup, boiled collards and corn bread. Throw in some American fried chicken and I could have been in the pinewoods of Georgia.


SIMON UPTON

ANCHOVY COUNTRY: CASTING THE 'VOLTA' OFF A BLACK SEA BEACH

On the other hand, there was *kuymak*, a dish of eggs, cornmeal and cheese, and the rubbery white cheese in question was vaguely like Swiss cheese – it had holes in it. It was similar to Swiss fondue, with a bit of Mexican flavor from the maize. Finishing off the meal was a chunk of *taş fırın ekmeği*, a stone-oven bread baked in loaves two feet across. It keeps for a week and has a rather dense texture – since wheat doesn't grow here, *taş fırın ekmeği* may continue the aesthetic of barley bread.

The most famous food of the Black Sea is the anchovy. When Black Sea food made a splash in Istanbul a few years ago, one of the most striking dishes at restaurants like Pafuli was *hamsi mısır ekmeği*: cornbread marbled with anchovies. In Trabzon they tell a story about a *Temel* (Black Sea man) who was boasting that his people knew a thousand ways to prepare anchovies. Someone challenged him to name them, and he began: "*Hamsi reçeli*" (anchovy jam). "That's enough," the challenger said. "I believe you."

I heard that story from Dr İbrahim Okumuş of the Department of Fisheries at Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi (Black Sea Technical University). He also told me the far less cheerful news about the future of the anchovy in the Black Sea. In the 1980s a New World comb jellyfish, *Mnemiopsis leidyi*, was accidentally introduced to the Black Sea. With no natural predator to control it, *Mnemiopsis* has gone on a feeding spree and devastated the entire food chain, from seals and dolphins down to anchovies. Particularly the anchovies.

"We've introduced the natural predator of *Mnemiopsis* from America," says Dr Okumuş, "but it has not helped. In the Black Sea it prefers to eat other things."

All this is very worrisome to the people of the Black Sea. Because mountains rise so close to the water there, cropland is very limited. The local people have always relied on the sea for their food. This is shown in the Black Sea institution known as the *köfte-balık*, a type of restaurant where the menu is dominated by fish and a local variety of meatball. The most splendid *köfte-balık* of all is *Cemil Usta Köfte ve Balık*, located in the village of Akçaabat near Trabzon. Its immense round dining room has marble floors, high ceilings and a 120-degree close-up view of the sea. In the other direction you enjoy a romantic vista of misty mountains. The place was originally built by the municipality as a wedding salon, but Cemil Kalkışım rented it and turned it into the most popular restaurant in the area. In Ramazan, it's booked ahead for months.

There is plenty of seafood on the menu, as there is anywhere in Turkey close to the water. However, the set meal is *köfte*, *piyaz* and *ayran*. *Piyaz* simply means onions, but here it is a salad of onions, parsley, red cabbage, romaine (cos lettuce), shredded carrots and white beans; *ayran* is the usual Turkish yoghurt drink.

The big surprise is the *köfte*. It is not the usual spherical lamb meatball but a flat patty, soft in texture and distinctly richer than ordinary *köfte*. They say this particular quality is due to the use of yayla (mountain pasture) lamb… and also to the fact that the *köfte* is enriched with butter and cheese.

If you were ever going to sell American teenagers on lamb *köfte*, this would be the first step. Then you could move on to stuffed *kara lahana* and anchovy cornbread. ◆

'A Baghdad Cookery Book' (Prospect Books), Charles Perry's translation of a 13th-century recipe collection, has been published in Turkish as 'Kitab-üt Tabih' (Nazlı Pişkin, translator, Kitap Yayınevi, Istanbul

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19th-century Caucasian Kuba rug, 167x117cms

Photograph: Serhat Kolerkılıç

Life in the Iznik countryside has been turned upside down for Azize Ethem by the death of her beloved husband, Selim. But thanks to the support of family, friends and neighbours – and Cornucopia readers – she has watched the bean harvest, seen her garden redesigned and enjoyed the grunts, groans and greasy grapplings of the first Iznik oil-wrestling tournament

VILLAGE VOICES

Although Selim had been ill for much of the last year, his death in April was a shock. Our dear friends Dorothy and Tayfun were with me at the hospital bedside and immediately I was cocooned in a blanket of love and support. Within the hour the Iznik loudspeakers were broadcasting the news, resulting in a flood of comfort and friendship.

With our daughter Sara on her way from London, I returned to our new home by the lake to spend the night alone. Simba the wonder dog, who would normally only enter a house when a thunderstorm was imminent, followed me into the *salon* and later slept on the floor by my bed. Next morning Tayfun took me back to the hospital to complete formalities, and on our return to Keramet we found Sara and friend Linda surrounded by TV people and newspaper reporters. Our poor son, Julian, had no chance of being with us, as Australian anti-terrorist laws prohibit travel without a 48-hour lapse between purchasing an airline ticket and travelling.

For the next few weeks I wandered the house in pyjamas and watched rubbish on television. I found it hard to face people. I don't know if it is a Turkish custom but so many people have asked me for a set of Selim's prayer beads to remember him by that I had to buy a dozen sets when I was in Istanbul.

I have been surprised by the number of CORNUCOPIA readers who have contacted me with messages of condolence. Mary and Colin Weir from Canada read our news on the internet and Mary, an accomplished quilter, is making me a sympathy quilt "as a small way to express our caring as you move into a new chapter of your life". Thank you.

Insidiously the world beyond my safe four walls began to intrude. Legalities forced me to leave the house. The Iznik mayor had given the cemetery plot as a present, which I think has to head the list of unusual presents I have received over the years. He had also thoughtfully reserved the adjacent plot for me – not free of charge, I hasten to add.

I had only just paid for my future resting place when I received a proposal of marriage. Sadly it was my 30 olive trees that were alluring, rather than myself. A neighbour who had hired a bulldozer for the day offered as an act of kindness to knock down the beautiful willow at the end of my garden. In an old section of the cemetery I came across a well-tended grave with five rows of beans and two of onions. This is a time for seriousness but at times I find myself laughing. Selim would have enjoyed it all so much!

Bereavement seems to give people the right to be bossy. Seeing me happily working outside, someone will shout from the neighbouring field that I must put on a sun hat. Mehmet Bean and his wife decided I would move in with their family, 14 kilometres down the road. Mehmet planned to drive me back and forth each day on his tractor. When I wait for a *dolmuş* on the side of the road, every tractor that passes stops and the driver checks on where am going, and why. Sara phones and lectures me about healthy eating.

Pick of the crop

It is now July and the bean crop is being harvested. Early each morning Mehmet arrives with half a dozen women perched in the trailer of his tractor. Slowly, throughout the heat of the day, bent double, they inch their way down the field picking the beans. Mehmet and his teenage son spend most of the day dozing in the shade as the women toil. The manly chores are the turning on and off of the irrigation pump, lifting the crates of produce onto the trailer at the end of the day and of course the driving of the tractor. Bean prices are good, I am told. His crop of cauliflowers was ploughed into the soil, as the wholesale price didn't warrant harvesting them. How odd, in a world where millions go hungry.

Up the garden path

My friend Chevrel Traher, the landscape gardener, has taken pity on me and is designing and organising the garden. She and Alan arrive with their large van crammed with plants, cobblestones and an assortment of irrigation pipes.

With Fatih, the gardener, I spend hours wrestling with a trickle hose and planting seedlings. A hill has been created which looked good until Mehmet's son ploughed it as a surprise. Unfortunately I was not at home the day the digging machine arrived to create the bog garden, and I now have a very deep, very large, muddy swimming pool.

Men come from fields around to give advice, never deterred by the fact that this is a flower garden and not a vegetable plot. Seventy-five tons of gravel for paths has arrived and the building team has returned to build the garden shed and outside kitchen. Hopefully the carpenter will return at some stage and finish the multitude of small jobs still waiting. Osman, the olive man, zooms in on his tractor with trailer-loads of soil. It is quite heady early evening when everyone departs and I am left to the silence and solitude as I sit and watch the sunset.

Slippery customers

With a new house and a field to turn into a garden I am not exactly lost for things to do, but friends are repeatedly telling me to get out. Actually it is more nagging than telling, so last Saturday I bowed to pressure and attended the *yağlı güreş* tournament on the lakefront.

Oil-wrestling is said to date back to the Persian Era but is a Turkish national sport. The Ottoman Sultan Orhan Gazi, his brother and forty warriors wrestled for fun at a place called Kırkpınar. Later the rules, together with covering the body as well as the tight leather trousers with olive oil, were formalised by the Janissaries. Kırkpınar in Edirne is now the site of the annual national competition where first prize is $100,000.

On Saturday we had our first ever local oil-wrestling event, held in Iznik. There was an enormous crowd and 200 would-be wrestlers had gathered from surrounding towns. Hundreds of men of all shapes and sizes, glistening with liberal coats of olive oil, waited for their turn to grapple, grunt and writhe on the grassy shore of the lake. It all looked very aggressive, as well as dangerous, but when one competitor got a piece of grass in his eye, his opponent gently removed it for him before they returned to the enthusiastic, slithering and noisy combat. The tea-boy from the *çayhane* near my bank came third in his category and his excitement as he received his certificate was wonderful to see. ◆

'Beyond the Orchard', a book of Azize Ethem's stories, published by Çitlembik–Nettleberry, is offered to CORNUCOPIA *subscribers post-free at £6.50*

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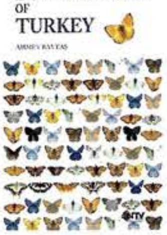

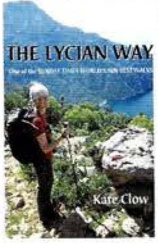

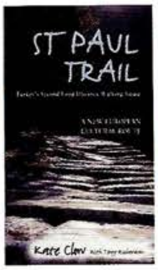

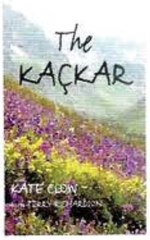

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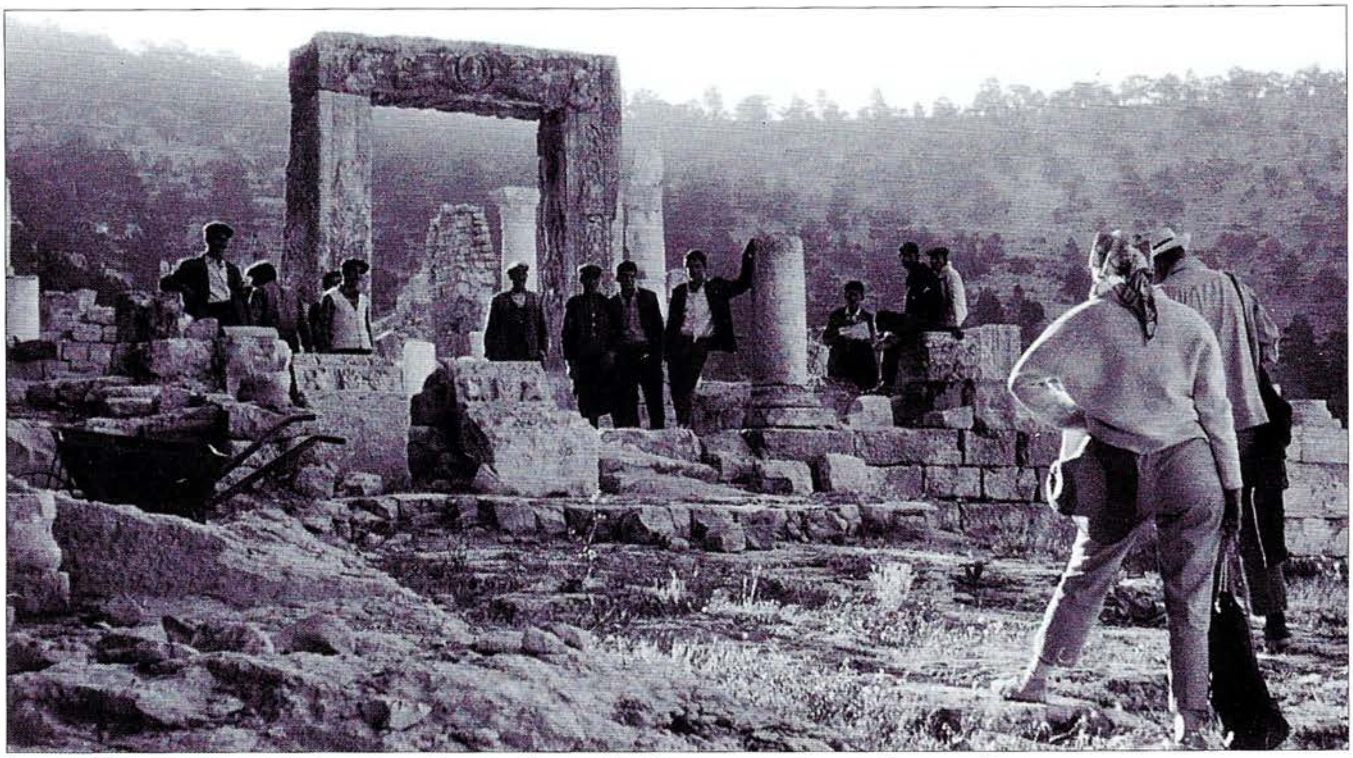
LEO GOUGH GREW UP IN THE HOTHOUSE ATMOSPHERE OF COLD WAR ANKARA, WHERE HIS FATHER WAS DIRECTOR OF THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, AND HIS MOTHER, A NAVAL ARCHITECT, RULED THE KITCHEN AND MANHANDLED THEIR SUPERANNUATED LAND ROVER. HE RECALLS TALES OF DERRING-DO FROM THE LARGER-THAN-LIFE VISITORS AND SCHOLARS WHO PASSED THROUGH THE INSTITUTE'S DOORS. THE BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGIST CLAUDINE DAUPHIN CONTRIBUTES HER PHOTOGRAPHS

HEAT AND DUST, MINCED GOAT AND MINISKIRTS



ALAHAN MONASTERY AT DAWN, JULY 1970. MICHAEL GOUGH, LEO'S FATHER, ASSISTED BY CLAUDINE DAUPHIN, CALLS OUT THE WORKMEN

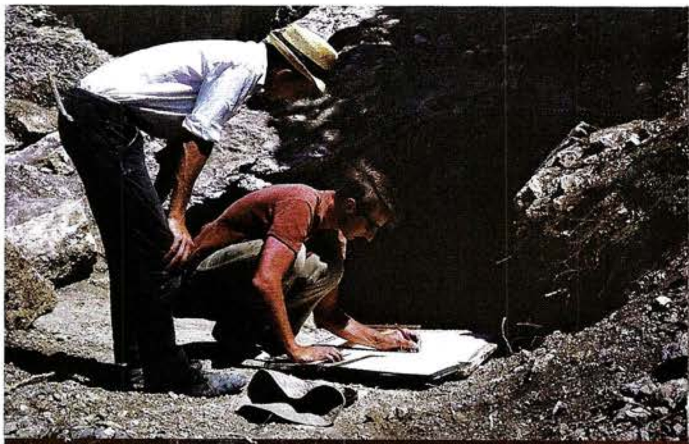
Although a series of remarkable archaeological finds during the 19th century aroused intense public interest, many early discoverers were gentlemanly amateurs whose enthusiasm exceeded their technical abilities. Heinrich Schliemann, for instance, who excavated Troy and Mycenae during the 1860s and 1870s, was criticised for over-hasty digging that destroyed vital evidence. It was clear that archaeology had to become professionalised, and during the first half of the 20th century a number of publicly funded archaeological schools and institutes were established across southern Europe and the Near East. The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara was set up in 1947, and my father, Michael Gough, became its director in 1961.

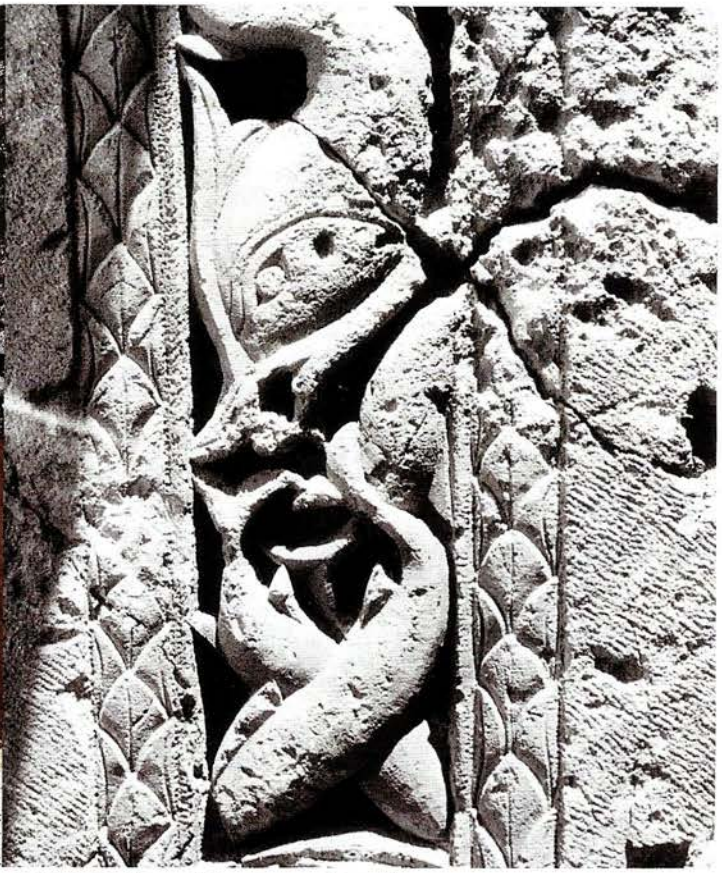
Through the Institute's doors came a stream of illustrious visitors, such as the prehistorian Kathleen Kenyon, the travel writer Freya Stark, and the Crusades scholar Sir Steven Runciman. Many had known the Near East from the time of the League of Nations mandates that partitioned the Ottoman Empire in 1919, and were full of vivid tales of everything from Bedouin attacking remote digs to German bombs exploding in the Pera Palas in Istanbul during the Second World War. By the 1960s that era had passed.

Turkey was now a key NATO ally, with two frontiers on the Iron Curtain, and it was the Cold War that fuelled the highly charged atmosphere in Ankara. During the winter, when no digging could be done, archaeologists were in demand for a never-ending round of diplomatic dinners and cocktail parties (often three an evening).

Daily life at the Institute, it has been said, was run on "colonialist" lines. This is unfair. There was certainly a degree of formality: meals were held in a common dining room, where my father would tap a glass with a knife to summon the servants, as he would have done in an officers' mess during the war. Even on excavations there was a smart dress code for the evening meal, as we dined on goat mince and aubergines, which kept up morale in these physically tough environments. I have adored goat ever since.

My mother, Mary Gough, would spend part of her mornings arranging





TOP LEFT: MEASURING UP IN THE EARLY MORNING SUN. ABOVE LEFT: OLD GREY, THE LAND ROVER THAT MARY GOUGH DROVE UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO COLLECT THE WORKMEN. RIGHT: 5TH-CENTURY FISH CARVED INTO THE WEST FAÇADE OF ALAHAN MONASTERY'S WEST CHURCH

menus with the cook, Necati, in true Mrs Beeton style; she showed him how to cook curry, then unknown in Turkey, and renamed it "English sauce" (*İngiliz salçası*). Trained as a naval architect, as an archaeologist's wife her role included making architectural surveys of ancient sites, driving the Institute's Land Rovers and running the logistical and domestic arrangements – all unpaid, naturally. She also provided first aid, on one occasion, on a mountain road, acting as midwife at the birth of Ahmet and Hava Çelikli's son, Arap.

The Çeliklis were a greatly loved Anatolian couple who hired the dig workmen and arranged accommodation in flat-roofed, mud-built houses during the summer months when whole villages would move their flocks to the yayla, the summer pastures. We could rent their empty houses, but it was not easy to find the 20 to 30 workmen needed for an excavation – everyone was at the yayla – so Ahmet had to scour the region. I have a vivid memory of bumping along with him and my mother in Old Grey, our superannuated Land Rover, bought from the British embassy, collecting workmen from tiny, oasis-like villages hidden in an empty, arid mountain landscape. They would clamber cheerfully into the back, carrying their supplies for the season – *yufka* (flat, unleavened bread), tomatoes, cucumbers and cheese – and grin as wonderingly at me as I, aged seven, did at them as we lurched off again down the precipitous mountain tracks. Ahmet tragically died in a motorcycle accident a year later while travelling in the mountains on Institute business.

Younger scholars at the bottom of the pecking order inevitably suffered from insecurity. To come from rainy, gloomy, post-war England to the electrifying but alien milieu of Ankara, then to be stuck in the sherd room, going over pottery fragments for long hours, cannot have been easy and was no doubt exacerbated by my noisy games with the other children, Nezaket, Ülkü and Mustafa, in the garden outside. The Swinging Sixties had not reached Turkey, and my mother fought intense battles with younger female students over dress codes. It really was inappropriate to dress revealingly, especially in remote villages, but many a 24-year-old from London was outraged at being stopped from wandering about in a bikini top and miniskirt.

Nevertheless, it was not pseudo-colonial stuffiness that characterised the Institute but larger-than-life scholarly eccentricity. Clad in *şalvar*, the baggy Turkish trousers, Elisabeth Rosenbaum translated Apicius's Latin text on Roman cuisine, doggedly cooking each of the ancient recipes to ensure they were edible (occasionally they weren't), and struggling to find a modern equivalent for the Roman staple ingredient, *liquamen*, a fermented fish sauce. A visiting professor from Canada decided to travel through Turkey in a Scottish kilt, complete with the obligatory knife, the *sgian dubh*, stuck in the top of his right stocking. The Institute's secretary, Ferdinand de la Grange, addressed everyone in a glorious French accent as "my dear". Ferdie, a Channel Islander whose house in Istanbul had been given to his grandfather by the Sultan in lieu of fees for tutoring the palace children, was a superb fixer. He dealt with everything from the frequent city-wide electrical blackouts to a stream of well-meaning amateur explorers who, convinced of the literal truth of the Old Testament,

Clockwise from top left: afternoon tea in the village 'Çayhane', with Leo Gough, aged seven, the monastery watchman and Mary Gough (far right); Michael Gough at work; archaeologist Tony McNicoll (with guitar); a Seljuk bridge on the Göksu

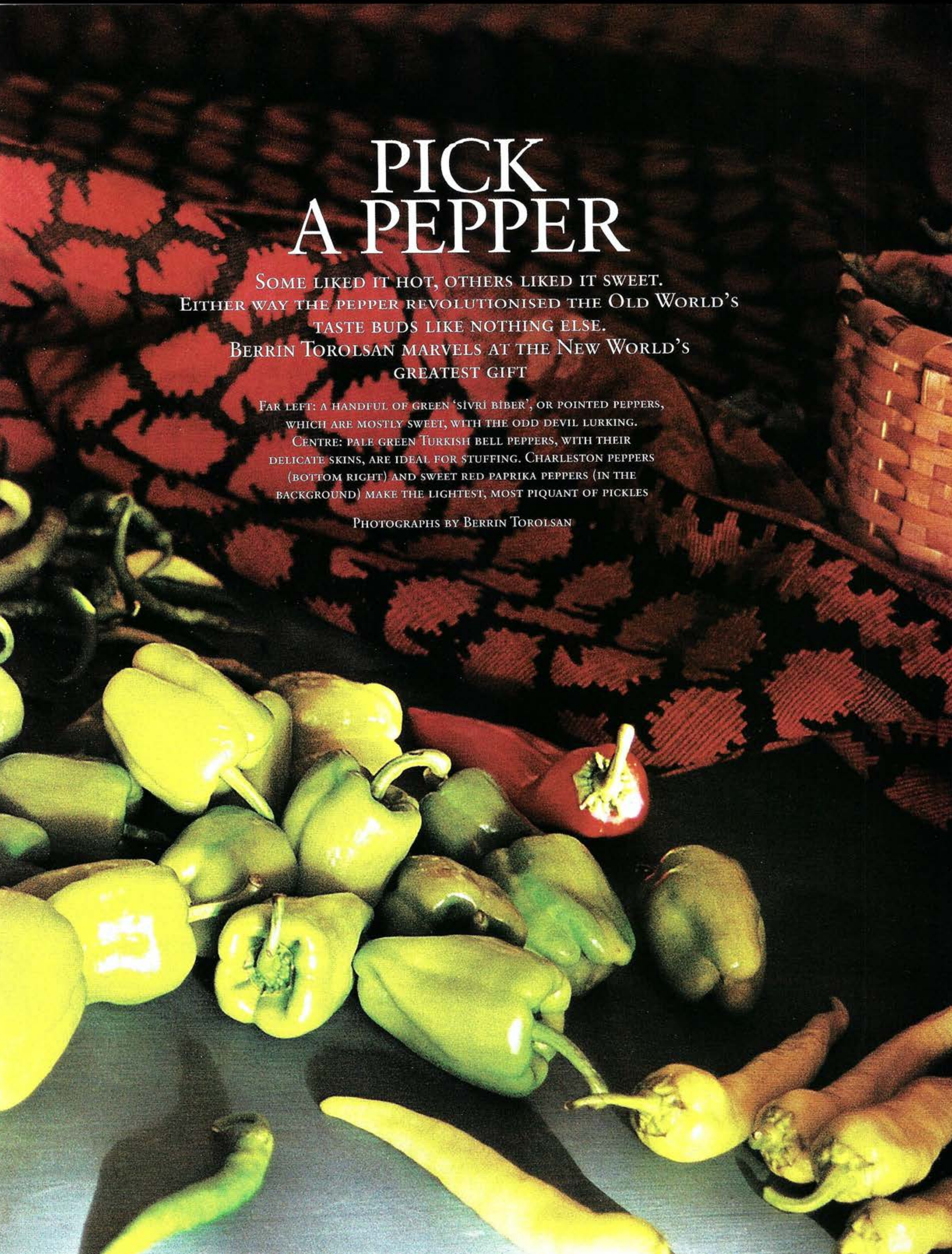
demanded help in their efforts to discover the site of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat.

The main work of the Institute, however, was more prosaic. Its most important task was to obtain annual permits for foreign archaeologists (not only British) to excavate. This was becoming increasingly difficult during the 1960s, for several reasons. Many sites were in politically sensitive areas, very near international borders. There were, naturally, misgivings about foreigners wanting to dig trenches near, say, the Russian border, and there had indeed been spying scandals in the past. For example, Kim Philby, the double agent who defected to the USSR in 1963, had been stationed at the British embassy in Turkey in the 1940s. Second, there were many eminent Turkish archaeologists, such as Ekrem Akurgal, who worked on the Aegean coast, and Kenan Erim, excavator of Aphrodisias. Why should the British, the Germans, the Americans and even the Japanese come and dig up Turkey's sites when Turkey had its own able scholars? The answer was largely financial: few countries with such a rich heritage could afford to turn away all foreign funding for excavations.

A third reason, perhaps the most sensitive of all, was the problem of the illegal export of antiquities, strictly forbidden under Turkish law. In common with Italy, Greece and Egypt, Turkey had suffered from the wholesale removal of antiquities and was determined to prevent any further depredations. Demand for antiquities had increased and international smuggling was rampant. Forgery, too, was on the rise, with many doubtful pieces appearing in museums abroad. Episodes such as the "Dorak Affair", when an archaeologist reported being shown an extraordinary prehistoric treasure that subsequently disappeared, increased the authorities' determination to control foreign digs. The net effect was that the Institute had to struggle hard to bridge the gap between academic expectations in Britain and the realities on the ground.

Ankara was cosmopolitan, but most archaeologists longed for the summer excavation season, when expeditions would set off for remote areas. My father, a Byzantinist, worked for years at Alahan, a striking early Christian monastic complex high in the Taurus Mountains. It was on these faraway digs that one encountered the real Turkey, where the total absence of conveniences such as electricity, hot running water and doctors was outweighed by the proximity of an ancient past pervading these wildly beautiful landscapes. We yearned for such luxuries as eggs and baths, fought to avoid sunstroke, jaundice and typhoid, and careened along the edges of mountain chasms. We have nearly forgotten how poor we were then, how much richer life was, and how intensely we lived. But in the villages old friends still ask after us from travellers who pass by. ◆

- *'Apicius: The Roman Cookery Book', trans. Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum, Harrap, 1958*
- *'Alahan: An Early Christian Monastery in Southern Turkey', ed Mary Gough, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1985*
- *The Plain and the Rough Places, Mary Gough, Chatto & Windus, 1954*
- *The British Institute at Ankara's 60 years of archaeology has ranged from Roman Anamur to prehistoric Keban Dam rescue projects and Çatalhöyük: see www.biaa.ac.uk*



PICK A PEPPER

Some liked it hot, others liked it sweet.
Either way the pepper revolutionised the Old World's taste buds like nothing else.
Berrin Torolsan marvels at the New World's greatest gift

Far left: a handful of green 'sivri biber', or pointed peppers, which are mostly sweet, with the odd devil lurking. Centre: pale green Turkish bell peppers, with their delicate skins, are ideal for stuffing. Charleston peppers (bottom right) and sweet red paprika peppers (in the background) make the lightest, most piquant of pickles

Photographs by Berrin Torolsan

> 'Either the sensational colour of paprika peppers brought gypsies to mind or they were popular among gypsies – who knows? Conical and large, their thick flesh is almost sugary-sweet'

When I was young, the penalty for answering back was a mouthful of hot pepper. It never actually happened, but the threat was there. I can hear my grandmother reminding naughty ones: "Where is the hot-pepper jar?" The hot-pepper jar contained hot red paprika flakes, of course. Known to English-speakers as cayenne or chillies, we simply call them *acı biber*, hot pepper, or, in some parts of Turkey, *ıssıot*, fiery herb. Today in southeastern towns such as Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis and Diyarbakır, where tons of red peppers are grown, consumed and exported, locals call kebabs laced with devilish hot pepper simply *acılı*, hot. *"Çek bir acılı!"* – "Pull a hot one!" – shouts the waiter as he passes your order on to the cook.

I often wondered why the ground pepper on the table next to the salt was so different yet still called pepper. As it turns out, it was not a coincidence. Columbus was responsible for the fact that they bear the same name. In 15th-century Europe, peppercorns from Malabar, on the south coast of India, were held in high esteem. Like salt – the origin of the word "salary" – pepper was weighed in gold; levies and rents could be paid in it. Salt and pepper were both essential for preserving food.

Common table pepper is the fruit of *Piper nigrum,* a climbing vine that grows in tropical forests and produces strings of berries. The berries are gathered unripe and left to dry in the sun, where they shrivel up and turn a dark, blackish brown. To obtain white peppercorns, the berries are allowed to ripen and the outer skin removed: the exposed kernel, with its milder aroma, is white pepper. Both versions were highly valued in Asia as well as Europe from Roman times. In the 13th century Marco Polo reported 43 cartloads arriving daily in Kubilai Khan's city of Kinsay, in southern China. Columbus found no black pepper in America. He did, however, stumble on capsicum pepper, one of *the* most important spices in centuries to come, and gave it the same name as the valuable pepper from the Indies.

The new American "pepper" was "more pungent" than black pepper and became so popular as a substitute that the name "pepper" stuck to all the fruits of the capsicum plant. A member of the *Solanaceae* (nightshade) family – along with tomatoes and potatoes from the New World and aubergines from the Old – capsicum peppers were easy to grow, thriving in temperate climates and proving to be great hybridisers.

Marking the shift in trade routes, the Ottomans seem to have dropped the Arabic name, *fül-fül*, and adopted the Latin *piper* (spelt *biber* in modern Turkish). As soon as the new imports arrived from America, the Portuguese took their cargo along the southern Mediterranean coast to Alexandria, and from there to Istanbul. The Ottoman governors then introduced capsicum peppers to the Balkans, along with so much other New World booty – corn, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, not to mention the turkey cock. According to the Austrian historian Bert Fragner, many American imports reached central Europe before they reached Italy. In Hungary capsicum peppers were still known as *torok bors*, or Turkish pepper, in 1684. In her book *The Melting Pot: Balkan Food and Cookery*, Maria Kaneva-Johnson quotes the Hungarian-born New York restaurateur George Lang as suggesting that the word "paprika" originated from the Balkan *piper-ka.*

All peppers, from the most fiery chilli and cayenne to the less violent paprika pepper and the milder bell pepper, derive from the species *Capsicum annuum*. Besides being dried and ground to flavour dishes in the place of scarce, and therefore expensive, black pepper, capsicums were also valued for their medicinal virtues. The substance that produces the heat sensation, capsaicin, is not only effective in soothing pain by desensitising the neurons that transmit pain, but also contains aspirin-like salicylates. Unsurprisingly, it was considered a wonder cure.

In 1937 the Hungarian chemist Dr Albert Szent-Györgyi won the Nobel Prize for isolating Vitamin C, which he called ascorbic acid, not from citrus fruit but from peppers. Peppers are in fact a prime source of many vitamins – A, B, C and D, which are rarely found together in one food. They stimulate the circulation and enhance the immune system.

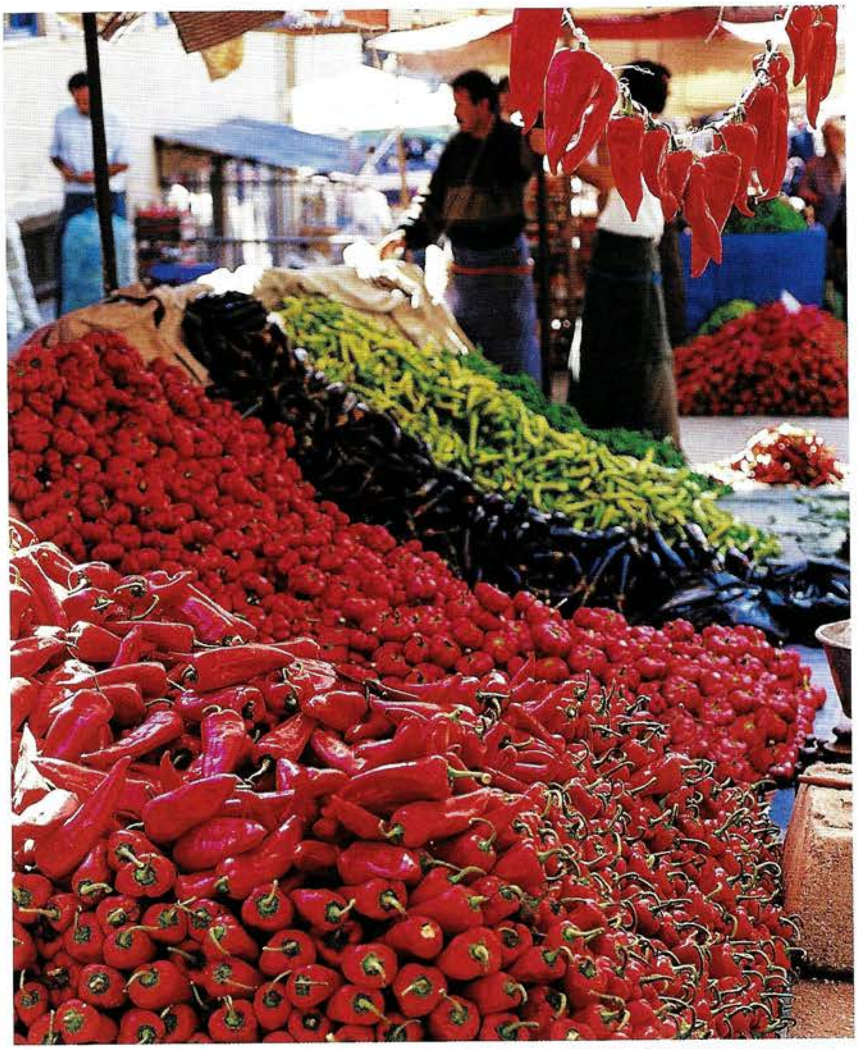
Red peppers added not only a new, addictive taste note to our dishes but also a new colour. The pigment which develops in the fruit when ripened, imparting its shade of fiery red, crimson or coral, is called *capsanthin* and is used in both food colouring and cosmetics.

In spite of the capsicum's quick acceptance as a spice, its use as a vegetable came as late as the end of the 19th century. It was the same in the Ottoman Empire: ground or powdered red peppers were used to flavour dishes, but more generally as a preservative, for instance in sausages (*sucuk*). The cured meat of Kayseri, *pastırma*, has a sealant of garlic, powdered fenugreek and hot red pepper. Traditional dishes such as *Çerkez tavuğu,* Circassian chicken, with its rich walnut sauce, Albanian fried liver, eaten with a garnish of onions, and the bean salad known as *piyaz* are all unthinkable without a sprinkling of ground hot red pepper. But there is no mention of fresh capsicum pepper in the old cookery books other than as pickles.

One explanation of why the fresh fruits were not eaten, either raw or cooked, is their fieriness. I remember from my childhood how hot bell peppers could sometimes be. Around the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean, dishes are mainly based on vegetables and olive oil, and spices are used with a light touch, because pungent flavours overwhelm more delicate tastes. People were always cautious when making dolmas or other dishes, hesitantly tasting peppers with the tip of their tongue first, to check. All the veins and seeds were carefully removed. In the 1930s many mild and sweet varieties were cultivated through selection, and peppers, green and red, came to be added to the shopping lists of chefs as a vegetable. Since then peppers, tomatoes and aubergines have become inseparable companions. Today hot bell peppers are non-existent.

Turkey treasures a couple of very special kinds of capsicum; for the moment they have stayed at home, unmolested by international genetic engineers. The Turkish cook's preference is unmistakably for the pepper known as *dolmalık biber* – dolma pepper. It is a roundish bell pepper with three or four lobes, a delicate pale yellowish-green skin and a sweet taste, and is no bigger than a small fist. Hollow inside, it is ideal for stuffing with minced meat or rice. Turkey also cultivates thick-skinned, fleshy red, yellow or dark green varieties, but only for export.

Bell peppers, like aubergines, can also be cored and sun-dried. Some families do this for their own use, so as to be able



Coral-red paprika peppers and tomato peppers in a weekly Anatolian market

to enjoy pepper dolmas in winter. Travelling in Anatolia, one often sees necklaces of peppers hanging from windows and balconies, drying slowly in the sun. Farmers also dry delicate dolma peppers in their thousands throughout June and August and despatch them to Turkish groceries in Europe to satisfy the demands of the *gastarbeiters*.

Another variety special to Turkey is the elongated, pencil-thin pepper known as *sivri biber* – literally pointed pepper. They are often mild but can be fiery, too. On market stalls they are sold in separate piles. The hot ones are generally darker, a deep emerald green; the pale ones are usually sweet. They are packed with vitamins and delicious raw in salads or on their own.

Çarliston (Charleston) peppers, similar to the Italian sweet peppers sold in Europe, are chartreuse-coloured, pointed and a handspan in length. They presumably took their name from the dance that was sweeping through Turkish ballrooms in around 1927, when this capsicum variety, number 52, was cultivated for the first time in the botanical institute in Antalya. They have a very fine skin and are delightful when cooked.

The red "tomato pepper" does indeed look like a ribbed tomato. The sweet, flavoursome flesh produces the most delicious *salça* sauce for winter and it is widely used for pickling.

In Turkey we also have sweet red paprika peppers, known as *çingene biberi*, or "gypsy pepper", which may be a hybrid of earlier cultivars grown in Hungary. Either the sensational bright colour brought gypsies to mind or they were popular among gypsies – who knows? Conical and large, their thick flesh is almost sugary-sweet. The skin is not fine, though, and needs to be peeled after grilling or parboiling, but they are very tasty and their colour is pleasing to the eye.

Last but not least are *süs biberi*, ornamental peppers, often planted from seed in small pots to decorate windowsills and courtyards. The tiny deep-red fruit of this miniature plant – sometimes elongated, sometimes round as marbles – contrasts prettily with the green foliage. When used for cooking, a single pepper is enough to heat an entire cauldron of bean stew. As Albanians have a reputation for enjoying hot dishes and having fireproof palates, it is also known as Albanian pepper, *Arnavut biberi*. An Albanian lady once told me that nothing without a burning sensation had any taste for her.

A scale for measuring the piquancy of peppers was devised in 1912 by one Wilbur Scoville. Cayenne pepper measures around 40,000 on the Scoville scale, pure capsaicin 150,000. Capsaicin, the wonder cure of the 15th century, is nowadays used in personal sprays to fight off assailants and by police forces against rioters – hence its name "pepper gas", or *biber gazı*. So, my grandmother's warnings have come true! Modern medicine is also rediscovering its healing properties, particularly against inflammation.

To become addicted to hot peppers, you may not have to grow up with them, but it helps. Except in the east and southeast of Turkey, Turks are timid about extremely hot food. *Acı* in Turkish means pungent and hot, but it can also mean sorrow and physical pain. "Axi," wrote Columbus in his dairy on January 15, 1493, "is an Arawak name." The Arawak were the first people he encountered in America. And their word, *aji*, is still in use in Mexico for capsicums.

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For cookery articles in past issues, see cornucopia.net/cookerylisting.html.
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BİBER DOLMASI
STUFFED BELL PEPPERS AND TOMATOES

6 medium-sized bell peppers
2 medium tomatoes
Filling:
250g minced meat (beef or mutton)
1 large onion (chopped)
2 tablespoons rice (rinsed)
A handful each of fresh mint, fresh dill and fresh parsley (all chopped)
Salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Butter (optional)

Fahrihe Hanım, author of the 1882 cookery book *Evkadını* (*The Housewife*), and the officer Mahmut Nedim, author of *Ahçıbaşı* (*The Chef*), published in 1898, give identical recipes for this dish. A century or so later, little has changed except that, for the sake of appearance, they both use the stalks as lids to the dolmas, and both warn the reader that the peppers should not be too hot – nowadays bell peppers are always sweet.

1 Cut around the stalk and core the peppers, discarding the seeds and stalks. Rinse out the shells and set aside, upside down, to drain in a colander.

2 Take the tomatoes and, leaving the stalk ends intact, cut lids from the opposite ends. Scoop out the flesh with a spoon to create hollow shells, reserving the pulp to add to the filling.

3 To prepare the filling, place the meat and onion in a deep bowl. Add the rice, herbs and tomato pulp to the mixture and season with the salt and pepper. To make the mixture moist, add half a glass of cold water. Mix with a spoon until all the ingredients are well blended.

4 With the help of a spoon stuff the peppers and tomatoes with the filling. Stand the dolmas upright in the bottom of a shallow pan, leaning against each other. Adding a little knob of butter on top of each dolma improves the flavour, especially if the meat is lean.

5 Add another half glass of water to the pan, cover and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and cook for 20 minutes or so, until the peppers are soft and the sauce has thickened a little.

6 Serve hot, perhaps with a bowl of *cacık* (cucumber and yoghurt salad).

YALANCI DOLMA
STUFFED BELL PEPPERS WITH RICE

10 bell peppers of equal size
Filling:
8 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon pine kernels
4 finely chopped onions
1 aubergine (optional)
8 tablespoons rice (rinsed)
2 teacups hot water
2 tablespoons currants
Salt and ground black pepper
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons dried mint
A handful each of fresh dill and fresh parsley (both chopped)
1 or 2 tomatoes to garnish (optional)
Fresh dill to garnish

Yalancı Dolma – which means "cheat's dolma", presumably because it contains no meat – is delicious, especially at the end of summer, when all the ingredients are bursting with flavour. Cooked in olive oil and eaten cold, this decorative dish is traditionally served as a second course, after a hot one, but it makes an excellent starter too. Being easy to transport and serve, it is also unrivalled for picnics. Try to find small, delicate Turkish bell peppers of more or less equal size.

1 Cut around the stalk, core and deseed the peppers. Rinse them out and set aside, upside down, to drain.

2 To prepare the filling: heat the olive oil in a pan and fry the pine kernels until golden. Add the onion and sauté until translucent and reduced. If you are including aubergine, peel and chop it finely and add it to the pan now. Stir-fry a little, and finally add the rice. Continue stirring for another minute or so. Pour over the hot water, add the currants and season with salt, pepper, sugar and cinnamon. Cover and leave to simmer on a gentle heat.

3 When all the liquid has been absorbed, remove the pan from the heat, add the fresh herbs and stir. Transfer the filling to a shallow dish to cool a little.

4 When cool enough to handle, spoon the filling into the hollow peppers, stuffing them without packing too tightly. Stand the dolmas upright in the pan, leaning against each other.

5 For extra colour, cut the tomatoes into quarters, scoop out the flesh (which can be saved for another dish) and use the peel as lids for the dolmas, making sure that the tomato edges are tucked inside the peppers.

6 Slowly add half a glass of cold water down the side of the pan, lower the heat and simmer, covered, for 15–20 minutes, until the peppers are tender and the rice is cooked. Leave to cool, covered and undisturbed, until needed.

7 Serve at room temperature with a garnish of snipped dill. *Yalancı dolma* will keep in the fridge for several days and, like most dishes cooked in olive oil, will improve with time.

BİBER KIZARTMASI
PEPPER FRITTERS WITH GARLIC SAUCE

4 tablespoons olive oil
A handful of peppers (pointed peppers, bell peppers or a mixture)
Sauce:
3 or 4 garlic cloves
Salt
1 large very ripe tomato
1/2 tablespoon wine vinegar
Yoghurt to serve

Simple yet delicate, this appetising dish of tangy fritters was popular on the Aegean islands, Mahmut Nedim tells us. His method is similar to ours, except that he uses citrus juice instead of vinegar and omits the tomato.

1 If using long pointed peppers, leave the stalks on. Cut bell peppers in half, deseed and remove the stalks. Rinse and dry carefully with kitchen paper so that the peppers do not spit when they are put in the hot oil.

2 Heat the oil and fry the peppers lightly until they are just blistered and have wilted a little. Transfer to a serving dish.

3 To prepare the sauce, crush the garlic with a teaspoon of salt in a bowl. Peel and cut the tomato into small cubes and add to the bowl. Stir in the vinegar.

4 Discard the left-over oil in the pan. Pour in a spoonful of fresh olive oil and add the tomato sauce. Bring to the heat and leave to cook for 5 minutes or so, until the tomato cubes are soft

END-OF-SUMMER HARVEST: IN THE FOREGROUND, HALF-RIPE TOMATO PEPPERS USED FOR PICKLING; IN THE BACKGROUND, FULLY RIPE ONES FOR MAKING 'SALÇA'. THE BRIGHT GREEN PEPPERS ARE LONG, POINTED 'SIVRI BİBER'. BEHIND, NEXT TO THE AUBERGINES, ARE TINY BELL PEPPERS

and their juice has evaporated.

5 Pour the sauce over the fritters. Serve warm with good fresh bread to soak up the delicious tangy sauce, or cold with a dollop of plain yoghurt. Both are tasty.

KIŞLIK BİBER TURŞUSU
BABY PEPPER WINTER PICKLE

1kg pointed baby peppers
Bunch of celery or celeriac leaves and stems
2 or 3 heads of garlic
Wine vinegar
Salt

In autumn tiny pointed green peppers are sold in markets in Turkey for pickling. They are the sweet juvenile fruits of the elongated peppers known as *sivri biber*. The flavours of celery, garlic and peppers marry beautifully in this pickle, and the result is a perfect complement to roasts, stews and cold meats. It will keep well through the winter.

1 Leave the stalks intact and trim off the points, to make sure the peppers absorb the vinegar.

2 In a large pan, bring water to the boil with a pinch of salt and blanch the peppers. When they begin to turn pale, after about 10 minutes, remove from the heat. They should be tender but firm.

3 Transfer to a colander to drain.

4 Wash the celery or celeriac leaves and stems and chop roughly. Dip the whole cloves of garlic in boiling hot water for a couple of minutes. The cloves will then pop out of their skins effortlessly.

5 Pack the peppers tightly in a jar with the whole peeled garlic cloves and celery or celeriac leaves between layers. Place a plate or weight over the vegetables to stop them from rising to the surface.

6 Fill a saucepan with enough vinegar to cover the peppers. Using 1 heaped tablespoon of salt to 1 litre of vinegar, heat until the salt dissolves and pour the hot liquid into the jar to fill.

7 Cover and store in a cool place. The pickle will be ready to enjoy in a week's time.

ÇABUK BİBER TURŞUSU
QUICK PEPPER PICKLE

1/2kg sweet 'Çarliston' (Charleston) peppers
Salt
3 or 4 garlic cloves (peeled)
1/2 glass wine vinegar

This 5-minute pickle is so quick and effortless to prepare that no summer dining table should be without this tangy relish. Of course it can be prepared with any kind of pepper. *Çarlistons*, similar to Italian sweet peppers, are fleshy, with a delicate skin. They don't need peeling.

1 Saving the stems, trim off the points of the peppers.

2 In a deep pan, boil plenty of water with a pinch of salt. Drop the peppers into the pan, cover and cook for 5–7 minutes, until limp. Transfer to a colander and leave to drain and cool.

3 In a deep bowl large enough to

contain the peppers, crush the garlic with 2 teaspoons of salt. Pour over the vinegar and stir to blend.
4 Arrange the peppers in the bowl, squeezing each gently beforehand to remove the excess water. Toss well, cover and allow the peppers to absorb the marinade at room temperature. Next day the pickle will be ready to enjoy and can be kept in the fridge for later.

ÇİNGENE BİBERİ TURŞUSU
GYPSY PEPPER PICKLE

10 sweet red paprika peppers
Salt
2–4 garlic cloves
1/4 glass wine vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil

Although this pickle takes a little longer to prepare than the previous recipe, it is ready to eat almost immediately. An excellent appetite sharpener, it can also be made with bell peppers of any colour available, or, better still for people who enjoy colour on their plate, a mix of green, red and yellow peppers.
1 Char the peppers under a hot grill until the skins are burnt and blistered all over. They can also be parboiled. When cooked, place them in a lidded container, cover and leave for half an hour or longer, until cool. This helps to loosen the tough skin.
2 Peel off the skin. Halve and deseed the peppers and remove the stalks. Rinse under cold running water and drain.
3 Crush the garlic with a little salt and mix with the vinegar. Arrange the paprika halves on a plate and pour over the garlic marinade. Store at room temperature for a couple of hours.
4 Before serving, turn the paprikas in the marinade at least once and serve with the olive oil drizzled over.

BİBER PATLICAN SALATASI
PEPPER AND AUBERGINE SALAD WITH YOGHURT

2 plump aubergines
2 or 3 bell peppers
Salt
2 garlic cloves (peeled)
1 glass plain yoghurt
4 tablespoons olive oil
Black or green olives to garnish
Parsley to garnish (optional)

The smoky flavour makes this refreshing salad very special. With good country bread it is a meal in itself, but it also goes well with savoury *börek* pastries and starchy pilavs.
1 Char the aubergines on all sides on an open gas flame or bake in a hot oven. They are done when the flesh inside is soft and creamy when pierced with the point of a knife. Discard the stalk ends and charred skin, and rinse under cold water to get rid of the burnt specks. Squeeze out the excess liquid and leave to drain.
2 Char the bell peppers on all sides. This will take much less time, because under the skin of the peppers there is not much to cook. Under running water, peel off the blistered skin. Remove the stalks and seeds and chop the peppers on a board.
3 Place the garlic cloves in a deep bowl and, with a teaspoon of salt, pound them to a pulp. Add the chopped peppers to the bowl and pound them too. Then transfer the aubergines to the bowl and keep pounding until the ingredients have blended to a creamy consistency.
4 Fold in the yoghurt and half of the olive oil and stir. Store, covered, in the fridge until needed.
5 When serving, give a last good stir, drizzle over the rest of the olive oil and garnish with olives and, if you like, a little chopped parsley for colour.

ŞEYTAN EKMEĞİ
DEVIL'S RAREBIT

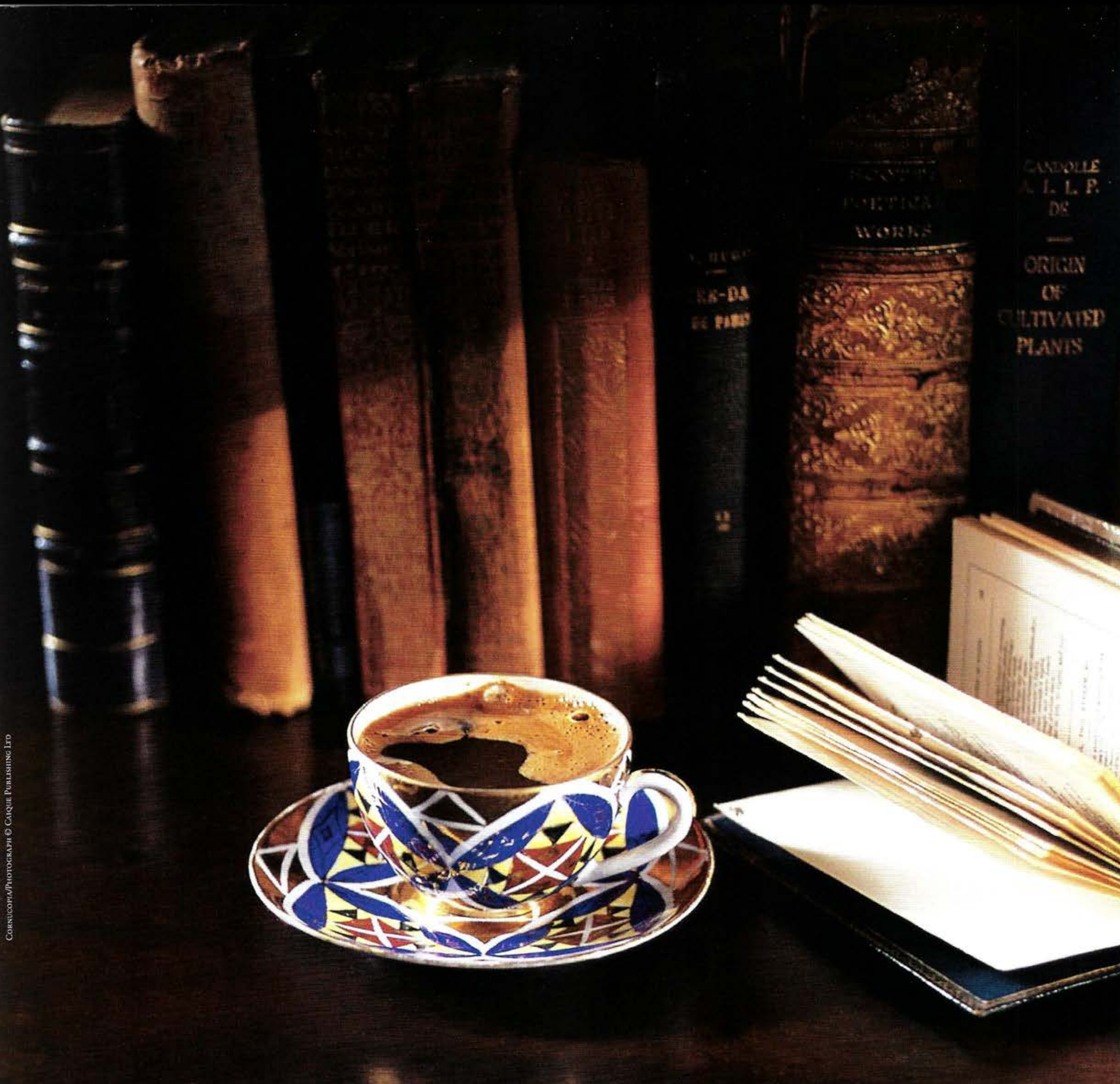
Slices of bread
Butter
Kaşar or Cheddar cheese (sliced)
Paprika flakes

Devil's Rarebit is a Sunday-morning treat that goes very well with a glass of dark Turkish tea – not to be eaten every day, just occasionally to pamper oneself. Any kind of bread can be used.
1 Heat the grill to the hottest level.
2 Butter the bread. Place the cheese on each slice, sprinkle with paprika flakes and grill until the corners of the bread have browned nicely, the cheese is melted and bubbling and the paprika flakes have released their goodness.

MENEMEN
EGGS WITH PEPPERS AND TOMATOES

A few sweet pointed peppers or 2 bell peppers
1 hot pepper (optional)
2 very ripe tomatoes
1 large onion
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt, sugar and ground black pepper
4 eggs

This most appetising and elementary of dishes is akin to the Basque *pipérade*, Hungarian *lecsó* or Catalan *samfaina*. In fact, variations can be found in almost every country's culinary repertoire. The combination of ingredients never fails to transform a simple meal into a feast.
1 Cut off the stems, deseed, rinse and chop the peppers on a board.
2 Skin and cube the tomatoes.
3 Halve the onion and slice into half-moons.
4 Heat the oil and stir-fry the onions until they are soft and slightly caramelised. Add the peppers and fry them until tender. Stir in the tomatoes and season with salt and sugar. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 3–4 minutes.
5 Break the eggs into the pan, taking care not to burst the yolks. With a fork, gently scramble the egg whites with the contents of the pan. Cook, covered, for a couple of minutes, until the yolks are clouded but still runny in the middle.
6 Serve straight away with a sprinkling of black pepper on the eggs and oven-fresh bread to mop up the irresistible pepper-and-tomato sauce. ◆



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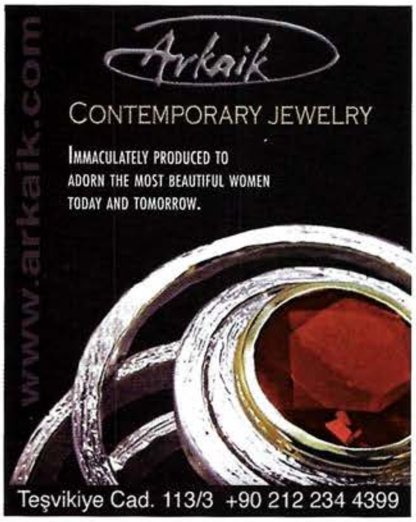
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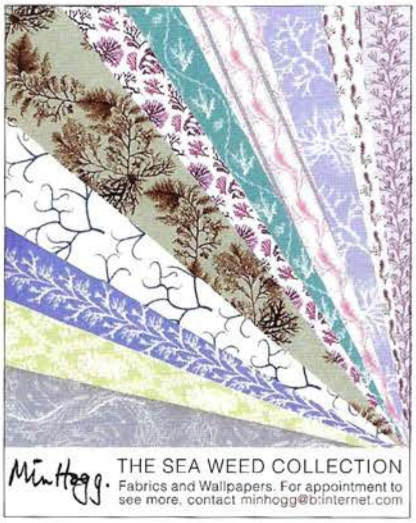
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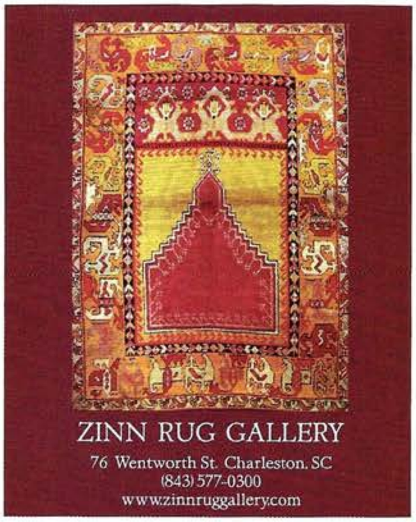
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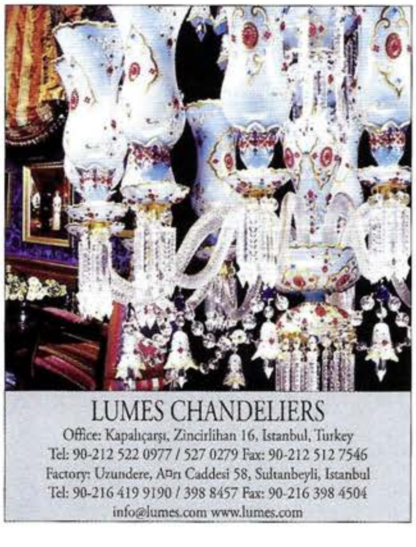
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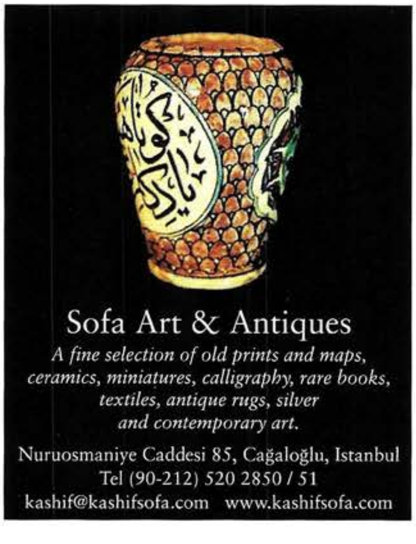
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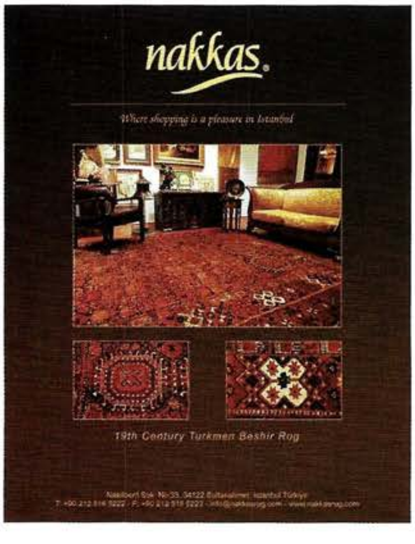
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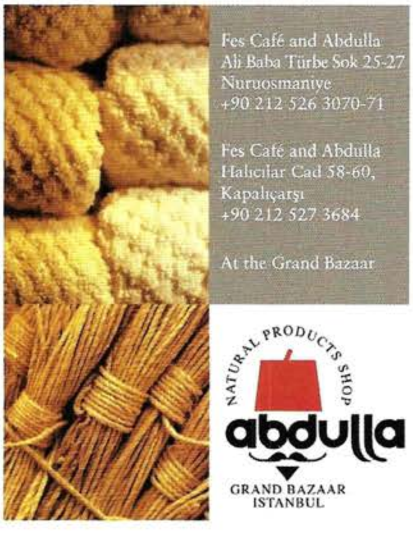
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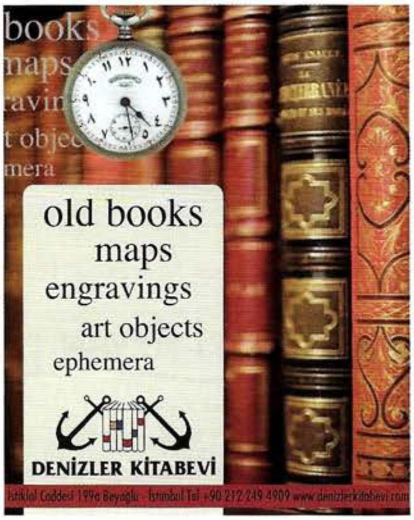
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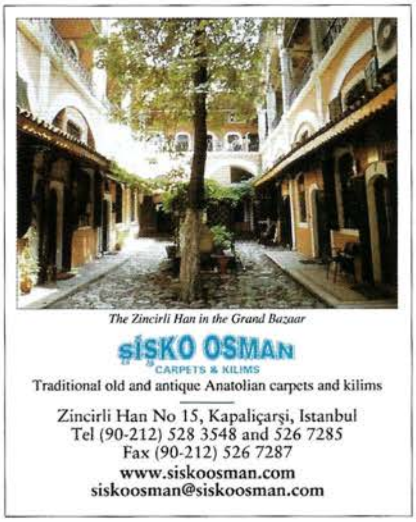
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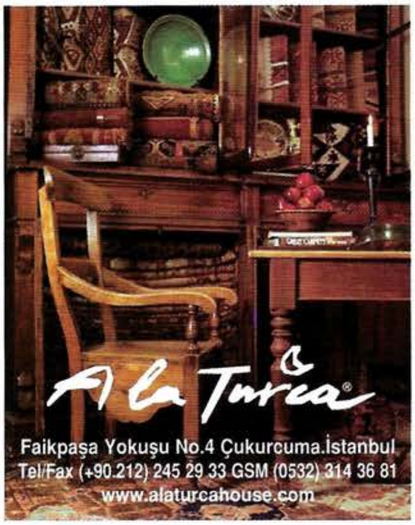
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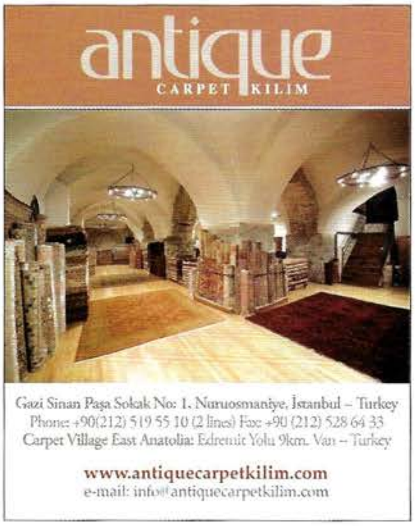
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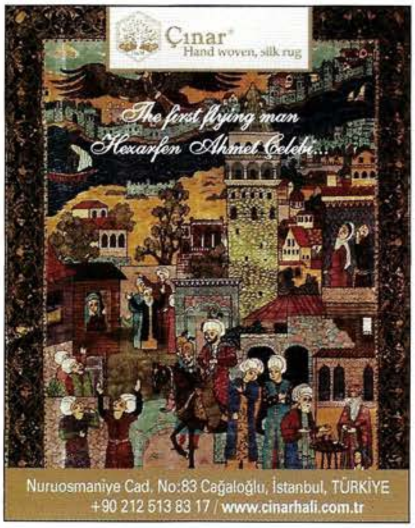
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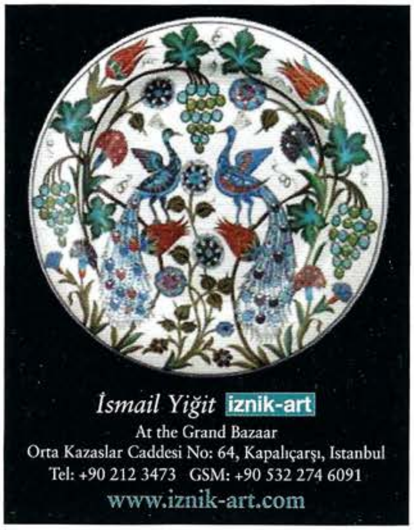
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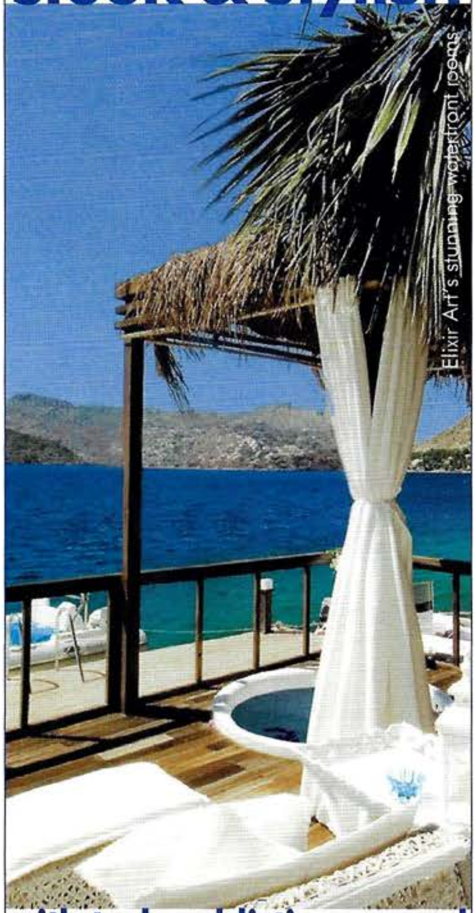

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The importance of being

IN GAZIANTEP, A SOUTHEASTERN CITY OBSESSED WITH CULINARY
TO SAMPLE THE BEST ON OFFER. MEANWHILE, BACK IN ISTANBUL,

If you want to know the meaning of the word "earnest", try discussing the right way to cook purslane soup over dinner in the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep. Or the perfect texture for the tiny rice dumplings in the festive dish of *yuvarlama*. There might be another spot on the globe that takes its food more seriously, that is more relentless in its search for the absolutely authentic, but it is on no map I've ever owned.

A walk through the kaleidoscope of colours and tastes of the downtown Elmacı market, past pulses and pepper pastes, nougats and bright green pistachios, is a dizzy-making excuse to sit down for another meal. People from Gaziantep refer to their home as Antep. The title "Gazi" was awarded to the city in 1921 but, like a best suit, they keep it uncreased in the cupboard at home. It's only outsiders who wear it in public – a bit the way New York's Sixth Avenuers never say "Avenue of the Americas". So, in Antep it's not politics that drives families apart but arguments over where to buy the best baklava. Foodie values are inculcated from birth. I wouldn't be surprised if babies there did blind tastings of mothers' milk.

Which makes it all the more surprising that there is not a well-defined culture of dining out. There are, of course, the famous kebab restaurants, many of which have established elegant outlets in Istanbul. In Antep itself these are on the whole places for lunch or an early dinner rather than somewhere to linger over an evening meal. For a start, most don't serve alcohol. This is all a bit frustrating for people from outside who still say "Gazi-antep". Though there are wonderful things to sample in the city's eateries, you always have the nagging suspicion your waiter is dreaming of a special dish he can only get back home.

And that is where Tahir Tekin Öztan stepped in to shake things up. Or rather stepped back in. Mr Öztan is an Antepian in exile who has returned home in style. His story is an interesting one. He went with his family to Istanbul as a lad, worked in the family restaurant after school and defied everyone's advice by opening up a hole-in-the-wall on a spot where restaurant after restaurant had previously failed. Mr Öztan now rules a catering empire on the Asian side of Istanbul. The largest of his Sahan chain would not seem small in Las Vegas (it is at the entrance to the vast Ataşehir housing complex, which would not seem out of place on Mars). And while Sahan is mass catering Gaziantep-style, and of course they serve kebabs, the important thing is that they offer a variety of other dishes as well. Particularly addictive are the cigarette-size chard dolma, stuffed with bulgur before being steamed.

Sahan is a big step in turning Antep's obsession with the authentic into a recognisable brand. "Just because it comes from Antep doesn't mean it has to be smothered in pomegranate molasses" is the motto – and in case you are wondering about the sour undertone to that purslane soup, it comes from the juice of *koruk*, unripe grapes. Sahan serves a mighty Sunday brunch as well, and there are *katmer* instead of pancakes – a sort of hot baklava crêpe filled with pistachio and clotted cream. There are supervised play-cum-dining rooms to give children a break from their parents, and alcohol on the menu for adults who need a break from their children. And it is all reasonably priced.

Sahan's owner is now carrying coals to Newcastle – or, as they say across the Iranian border, "cumin to Kerman" – in this case re-importing Antep cuisine to his home town. Sahan Şirehan, in the heart of the old city, occupies an extraordinary complex of buildings including the business *hans* and warehouses that were used by merchants trading in dried fruits, nuts, fruit molasses and gelatinous "fruit leather". The scale and beauty of the complex suggests this was a highly lucrative trade.

Tahir Tekin Öztan is currently converting what could well be the largest caravansaray in Anatolia into a luxury hotel. It is a wonderful late-19th-century building designed around a courtyard with an upper storey of arcades. Across the street is a another stone *han* that serves as a restaurant attached to a modern annexe. There are olive-wood tables inlaid with tinned-copper motifs, and the space is separated by the cloistered arches, so it seems far more intimate than the number of square metres might suggest. I sat with a cold beer beside an elongated fountain, with the intense, dry heat of the day replaced by the pleasant night air, picking at a cold dish of almonds mixed with chard and an ice-cooled salad close to a gazpacho. Antep or Gaziantep, whatever you call it, now has a place in which to linger.

The west of Anatolia may not be famous

earnest

AUTHENTICITY, ANDREW FINKEL NEEDS NO EXCUSE
ECLECTICISM RULES

for gastronomic zing, but local chefs are doing their homework, re-inventing tradition and creating the ambiance for a pleasant evening out. Kütahya is the home of Turkey's porcelain industry and an interesting pit stop on the way to the southern coast. It is now a destination in its own right, thanks to the İspartalılar Konağı hotel, an intelligently restored, half-timbered and stuccoed mansion (*konak*) in the historic centre. The rooms are period, uncluttered and enormous. Across the way is the Germiyan Konağı, a similarly elegant building divided into old-fashioned dining rooms serving regional dishes. These include *tirit*, chicken in a shallow broth covered with crunchy croutons made from fresh-rolled *yufka* pastry dough. If you want a drink with your meal, however, best to nip back to the garden of the decent restaurant in the hotel across the street.

Back to Istanbul and the unashamedly eclectic. *Unagi* (eel) sushi with a coating of melted brie accompanied by a 2006 Corvus Teneia (a buttery white wine made on Bozcaada from the *çavus* grape) is a bit of post-modern gastronomy that is served with a prime Bosphorus view. The Sunset Grill & Bar started, as the name suggests, as an American-style joint serving wings and potato skins some 15 years ago but quickly found a more secure niche as the evening out for the city's high and mighty. The crowds on a weekday night suggest its fortunes are recession-proof. This is in part the result of a canny strategy of trying to please everyone. Locals can choose from the Italian-biased side of the menu, while their guests from abroad can opt for more Turkish dishes. There is also a sushi bar. The owner, Barış Tansever, has gone one step further by securing Hiroki Takemura, of Nobu London fame, as chef in residence. Memorable, apart from the *outré* sushi, and the fig tempura that was a creamy porridge of black cod. The *wakamame* sauce sounds Japanese, and there was a citric taste of *yuzo*, but the dish would not have been out of place in Madame Prunier's.

SG&B prides itself on an intelligent selection of out-of-the way Turkish wines. It also has an impressive list of great vintages acquired from the bankruptcy auctions of a banker who might well have been a customer. Mr Tansever admits some of the bottles would bankrupt the average punter, largely due to a senseless government consumption tax. This multiplies the price of a similar bottle in Europe so many times and is so swingeing that it raises almost no money for the treasury. Instead, Mr Tansever complains, it shackles Turkey's efforts to become a high-end tourist destination. This has not prevented him from assembling an extremely rare collection of spirits, including 19th-century brandies and pre-Prohibition bourbons. These are consumed by even the best-heeled diners in eye-dropper-sized proportions.

Every Istanbul neighbourhood has its favourite lunchtime spot, full when places nearby struggle with empty tables, and where the food just has the edge. Nişantaşı being Nişantaşı and way upscale, you would rightly expect the local hotspot to be seriously good. And that is pretty much all you need to know about Kantin, where the owner, Şemsa Denizsel, chalks up the day's specials from an Aegean-influenced kitchen and oversees an airy, old-fashioned dining room and garden terrace with breezy competence. There are fast-food favourites such as *çıtır*, a wafer-thin pastry filled with a choice of tasty things including aubergine. More sophisticated dishes include fish *en papillote* and fresh anchovies cooked in vine leaves. The casseroles are always reliable, and the squid I had once, simmered in onions and served cold, bordered on the remarkable. If you need to keep a clear head in the afternoon, there is home-made lemonade or traditional sherbets, such as a cold infusion of tamarind. The breads are good, as are the sweets, and there is now a shop selling condiments and prepared dishes. No reservations, but Kantin stays open for an early supper. ◆

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